



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

The Only Publication authorized by the Hon. W.F. Cody ("BUFFALO BILL")

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 19.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S DEATH GRAPPLE OR SHADOWED BY THE SURE SHOTS



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
"BUFFALO BILL"

"NOW, CHIEF, IT COMES TO A DEATH GRAPPLE!" CRIED BUFFALO BILL.



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BUFFALO BILL'S DEATH GRAPPLE;

OR,

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By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE STRANGE HORSEMAN.

"Pardon me, sir, but who guides this train?"

The man who asked the question was a most striking-looking person, one to attract attention anywhere, and especially in that wild land of the far West, where danger and death were upon every hand.

His tone was courteous, yet commanding, and he had ridden hard, as his splendid horse showed, to overtake the wagon train, the trail of which he had come upon to at once know, as a man of the border, that it was going into certain danger and death if not checked very soon.

The horseman had raised his broad sombrero at the sight of ladies in the train, but his question had been addressed to a man of middle age, evidently the one in charge.

In an ambulance, used as a "prairie carriage," sat an elderly female, beyond all doubt belonging to that much-abused class known as "old maids," and also within it was a negress of middle age, and whose inky black husband was driving the vehicle.

There was a second ambulance, driven by a prairie waif, a boy of fifteen, known as "Pepper," and whom Mr. Markham, the owner of the train, had picked up on the trail westward.

Three large and well-filled wagons, driven by young bordermen, a lot of loose horses and cattle in charge of other men, with Mr. Markham and his really beautiful daughter, Madge, both well mounted and attired, completed the outfit thus halted upon the prairie by the unknown and handsome stranger, except the guide, who was not just then with the train.

The attire of the stranger was handsome, being a mixture of Mexican and frontier garb, to which was added cavalry boots, with massive spurs of gold, a sombrero of dove-colored felt, and looped up on one side by a pin of solid gold, representing a buffalo, with large diamonds for eyes and amber for horns.

It was certainly a unique and costly trinket for a borderman to wear, but was in keeping with the diamond solitaire that glimmered in his black silk necktie, and a chain of massive links of gold that encircled his neck, and had attached to it a watch, which was hidden in the fob of his hunting shirt.

His feet were small and shapely, and his whole bearing in keeping with a man who did as he pleased and asked no favors or mercy of paleface or redskin, and lived without fear.

All this both Mr. Markham and Madge took in at a glance as the man approached; but when he drew nearer and they gazed into his face, mentally they confessed that they were looking upon a most remarkable personage, for no woman could have possessed more clearly-cut features, or eyes more expressive and full of feeling.

His mouth, slightly stern, was half hidden beneath a dark mustache, and his resolute, well-rounded chin by an imperial, while his hair was waving and fell down his back half-way to his waist.

But one look into his large, earnest eyes, and the stern, somewhat reckless, dare-devilish mouth, and it would be a most casual observer who would set him down as other than a true man, a prince of the plains.

"Pardon me, sir, but may I ask who is chief of this train?" again asked the strange horseman, in a clear, tenor-like voice.

"I am, sir," said Mr. Markham, in reply.

"I hope, sir, it is not your intention to attempt a settlement upon the Loup, as your course implies?" resumed the stranger, in an inquiring way.

"By no means, sir, for I am bound for a ranch which I have purchased upon the Platte."

"The Platte, sir?"

"Yes, for I have purchased the Waller Ranch and its cattle."

"The Platte, sir, is not in this direction," said the stranger, with some surprise.

"So I know, sir; but my guide, who has ridden on

ahead to find a camping-ground for the night, takes this trail to avoid bands of Indians on the direct trail," explained Mr. Markham, while Madge sat on her horse attentively regarding the strange horseman, who, interested, apparently, in what her father had said, did not glance toward her.

"Why, I have just come from Fort McPherson along the river trail, and have seen no traces of redskins, nor heard of any at Fort Kearney, when I halted there, for I am bearing dispatches, sir, from McPherson to Omaha."

"My guide met some one who told him there were Indians on our trail."

"He was misinformed, I assure you, for there is no man on the border who knows better than I the movements of the hostiles."

"That being the case, we have come a long way off our course for nothing."

"You have, indeed, sir, and another day on this trail would take you right into the Indian country, where your train would fall an easy prey to massacre!"

"My dear sir, you surprise me, for I cannot understand how my guide can be so ignorant of the facts as you state."

"Who is your guide, may I ask?"

"He is known in Omaha, where I engaged him, as Kio Carl."

Both Mr. Markham and Madge saw the start the stranger gave, while he answered, promptly:

"I know him, sir, as an infamous scoundrel, and he bears upon his right ear my mark."

"That man, sir, was leading you into a trap, for he is friendly with old Black Face, the chief of the tribe into whose clutches this trail will take you."

These words fell like a thunderclap upon both Mr. Markham and Madge, and they sat staring in amazement upon the strange horseman before them.

"My dear sir, you astound me," at last Mr. Markham found words to say.

"Kio Carl would have astounded you still more, sir, had I not struck your trail, and, knowing no train should come up here, feared you were lost, and came on to warn you."

"And most heartily do I thank you, sir; for your manner and your face, carry conviction with all you say."

"I also join my father, sir, in thanking you," said Madge, softly.

The stranger's face flushed, and he said, quickly:

"I seek no thanks, nor do I want them, for doing my duty.

"My orders are imperative to press on to Omaha, but I felt I would not be doing my duty to allow you to go on this trail, when I knew your force, so came to warn you."

"May I ask how you knew what force I had?" asked Mr. Markham.

"It is as plain to me, sir, as is the lightning and thunder the precursors of a storm, for I read trails as an open book.

"See, there are the trails of your ambulances and wagons, half-blurred out by a few cattle, and I knew you could not have more than half-a-dozen fighting men, which in this country would be a mere handful against old Black Face and his braves, more especially if you were led into an ambush."

"I see, sir, that you read signs on the prairie as one would an open book, for my force does number but a dozen all told."

"You say that your guide has gone on to prepare you a camping-place?"

"Yes; so he said."

"The more likely to arrange his red allies into an ambush for you."

Both Mr. Markham and Madge paled slightly, while the former said, anxiously:

"Then what is to be done, sir?"

For a moment the stranger was silent, and then he said:

"If you ask my advice, sir, it is to go no further."

"Yet your duty will not permit you to guide us?"

"No, it will not, I regret to say, unless——"

He paused, and Madge quickly said:

"Your manner implies that there is a possibility that you may do so."

"Lady, were your father alone—that is, were there only men on the train—I would set them on the right trail and let them look to their manhood and prowess to pull them through all right.

"But with yourself, and, as I see, another lady on the train, I feel that it is my duty to make every sacrifice.

"But first we will settle about Kio Carl, and then I will decide what is best to be done."

"And what would you advise about him?" asked Mr. Markham.

"Catch him," was the laconic response.

"But how?"

"He has gone to yonder motte?"

"So he said."

"He is not in sight on the prairie."

"No; he was just disappearing when we sighted you."

"Then he does not know of my coming?"

"He cannot possibly do so."

"Then we'll fetch him back to the train."

"Yet how can we do so?"

"Halt your train, call all your men about one wagon, as though it had broken down, and then wait until he discovers that you are delayed."

"Well, sir?"

"Naturally, he will return, and here on the open prairie you have him at your mercy."

"And you advise that we seize him?"

"Oh, no, sir; I will do that."

"You?"

"Yes; leave him to me, for I will keep in the background until the proper moment to act."

"And then?"

"And then you will see that he knows who I am, and that I am aware that he is a black-hearted villain."

"You will not kill him?" asked Madge, timidly.

"No, miss, for I never take the life of a human being unless it is absolutely necessary," was the response, and Madge breathed more freely, as she had feared that she would be compelled to witness one of those dread scenes for which the far frontier was noted, and of which she had, incidentally, heard so much.

"I will do at once as you suggest, sir," said Mr. Markham, and he rode forward and halted the train, for the three had been riding at the rear during the conversation that took place.

In a few moments the train had come to a halt. Mr. Markham had explained to the men the tidings brought by the strange horseman, and all gathered about one of the wagons, as though engaged in mending a broken-down vehicle.

Back in the rear the stranger waited, standing by the

side of his superb horse, and conversing with Mr. Markham and Madge.

Eagerly Mr. Markham watched for the returning form of the guide, and thus nearly an hour passed away.

At last the eye of the stranger, as powerful in sight as a glass, caught sight of the guide, and he said, simply: "He is coming."

"Ah! I see him now," and Mr. Markham gazed earnestly at him through his field glass, as did also Madge, who remarked:

"You have marvelous eyes, sir, for he is yet very far off."

"And is returning at a gallop, which will bring him here in half an hour."

"You have superb sight, sir," said Mr. Markham.

"The sight of the prairie-man, sir, as with the sailor, improves with long practice in searching vast expanses, where a failure to detect a foe often brings death, hence it is most necessary to cultivate one's vision, and, though I carry a glass, I seldom need its use," was the reply.

"Well, sir, have you decided what you shall do when the guide returns?" asked Mr. Markham, somewhat nervously, as the returning forms of horse and rider grew each instant more distinct.

"Yes, sir."

"May I ask what it is you will do?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Please go forward with your daughter to where the men are, and when Kio Carl comes up and asks the cause of your delay, simply tell him that you have decided to retrace your trail and take the right one, along the Platte."

"And then?"

"I will attend to the balance, sir," was the calm reply.

Mr. Markham nodded and rode forward with Madge, leaving the stranger concealed behind the rear wagon.

A quarter of an hour passed, the whole family gathered about the center of the train, and waited somewhat nervously for the coming of the guide, whom all seemed to fear.

Presently he dashed up and asked, sternly:

"What means this long halt here, when there is hardly time to reach a camping-ground before night?"

"It means, Kio Carl, that I have decided to go no further on this trail," was Mr. Markham's firm response.

"Ha! Do you intend to assume the duties of guide, sir?" was the angry response.

Mr. Markham hesitated, and then came in deep tones:

"No, but I do, Kio Carl!"

The man started back, jerking cruelly upon his rein until he forced his horse upon its haunches, and when his face became pallid, cried, in startled tones:

"Great God! Buffalo Bill!"

The stranger had stepped boldly out before him, from behind one of the wagons, and held his revolver leveled at the guide.

His face was smiling now, and he answered, in a firm and easy way:

"Correct, Kio Carl, and I have the drop on you!"

CHAPTER II.

THE TRAITOR GUIDE.

"Buffalo Bill!"

The voices of the teamsters uttered the words in chorus, for the name spoken by Carl had told who was the stranger, and all knew him well by reputation, though not one of the trainmen had before seen him, excepting the traitor guide.

Kio Carl was a man of consummate nerve, and he regained his coolness almost at once, and said, in as firm and easy a way as that in which Buffalo Bill had addressed him:

"Yes, and it is not the first time you have had the drop on me, Cody."

"And I warn you to beware of the third," was Buffalo Bill's response.

"Yes, for the tide must turn; but what means this attack on me now?"

"It means that I have caught you at your old tricks of deviltry and thwarted you."

"To what do you refer?"

"You were leading this train to an ambush, at the head of which, doubtless, was your old redskin friend, Chief Black Face."

The guide turned deadly pale at this bold accusation, but no muscle of his face quivered, as he answered, savagely:

"You have no proof of this, Buffalo Bill!"

"By the Rocky Mountains! But I will have, sir, before another sun shall rise. Up with your hands!"

This last was given in a tone that was decided.

The guide hesitated, and Buffalo Bill repeated:

"Up with your hands, Kio Carl!"

"You have no right to make me a prisoner."

"I assert that right! Will you obey?"

"No! And I call upon my employer and his men to aid me against you," Carl cried, sliding from his horse and confronting the scout.

"They will do nothing, and if you love life, worthless as yours is, I shall tell you but once more to throw up those bloodstained hands of yours. Obey, or take the consequences!"

The revolver was held firmly as though in a vise, and all saw that Buffalo Bill meant what he said.

Wholly at Buffalo Bill's mercy, Kio Carl, with a bitter execration, raised his hands above his head.

Stepping forward, it was but the work of a minute for Buffalo Bill to disarm him, and then, taking the lariat from his saddle-horn, he ordered the guide to remount his horse, which Kio Carl did with a smothered curse. Once again in the saddle, Buffalo Bill bound him securely hand and foot, tying his feet beneath his horse.

"Now you are safe for the present, and if my suspicions are verified this night, with the permission of this gentleman, I will shoot you as I would a mad dog."

Then, turning to Mr. Markham, Buffalo Bill continued:

"I would advise you, sir, to at once follow your tracks back to the regular trail, pressing on until you reach your camp of last night, even if darkness overtakes you."

"But we have no guide, sir, and——"

"If this man does not lead you back to that camp, then I will kill him, so help me Heaven! Do you hear me, Kio Carl?"

"I do."

"See to it, then, that this train does not go off the trail, if you value life."

"And where do you go?" asked Kio Carl.

"That is my business, but rest assured that I will be on hand to execute sentence against you if you play any of your tricks."

"You will return soon, sir, I hope, for your words imply that you intend leaving us?" said Mr. Markham.

"Yes, sir; by daylight, or soon after, I shall be back."

"Yet, should I not, press on once more, and I will join you at your next camping-place."

Raising his broad sombrero, with a smile and a bow, he called to his horse, and, throwing himself into the saddle, dashed away across the prairie, while Mr. Markham, trusting implicitly in the man, put his train right about and began retracing his trail down the Loup.

Buffalo Bill had ridden but a short distance from the train, when he came to a sudden halt, and sat there in his saddle, like a man in deep thought.

After a minute's halt, he turned his horse and galloped back toward the train.

Surprised at his return, Mr. Markham halted the train, and, when he came up, asked:

"Well, sir, have you changed your mind about going on?"

"No, sir, but I should like to have you move the train on, excepting one wagon and your traitor guide."

Mr. Markham seemed surprised, but gave the orders at once for the rear wagon to stop back for a while, and he and Kio Carl, whose bridle rein was hitched to the rear of the wagon, also did so.

"What does that strange man intend now?" murmured Madge, as she rode on by the side of the ambulance in which sat Miss Samantha Doolittle, the old maid housekeeper, who was in ecstasies over the handsome face of Buffalo Bill.

"Kio Carl, I will trouble you to change horses with me," said Buffalo Bill, quietly.

The guide looked at him in surprise, and said, in a surly tone:

"Why ask what you have the power to do without asking?"

"And I will change clothes with you, and borrow your arms, for I know you are a man to keep the best of weapons."

"In Satan's name, do you intend to rob me?"

"No, Kio Carl, for I leave mine in the train. Quick! Off with your duds, or I will help you."

"I will not."

"Do you mean it?"

"I do, for I shall not aid you in any devilish trick you may have formed to ruin me."

"I will take them off of you."

"You cannot."

There was a tone of defiance in the voice of the man, despite his bonds, and Buffalo Bill answered:

"Mr. Markham, I hate to hit a man when he is down, but I must do it. Again, Kio Carl, will you exchange clothing with me?"

"You have my answer."

Quick as a flash the iron arm of Buffalo Bill shot forth, straight from the shoulder, and the knuckles of steel fell full in the unprotected face of the prisoner.

Like a log he dropped to the ground, and instantly Buffalo Bill bent over him, and after undoing the lariat coils, quickly disrobed him of his outer clothing and hat.

"I hope you have not killed him, for he fell like a log," said Mr. Markham, who could not understand the strange conduct of Buffalo Bill.

"No fear of that, sir. I struck him to save a struggle, for I saw that he would not yield, and I merely stunned him."

"But what is your intention, sir?"

"You shall see."

Throwing off his own outer clothing, Buffalo Bill said to the teamster:

"Here, pard; pull these on him."

"I'm durned ef I dress him up in your rig, Buffalo Bill, fer he don't deserve it; but I has some old togs in the wagin as will do as well, an' they'll astonish him, fer they belonged ter an honest citizen, which are myself," replied the teamster, and he dragged out a pair of coarse pants, a slouch hat, full of holes, and a woolen shirt, and began to pull them upon the still unconscious man, while Buffalo Bill was rigging himself out in the clothing of the guide.

"Thar, now, he do look well, an' you must take keer, Buffalo Bill, yer don't let the devilment in them clo's strike in, fer it are a disease that are catching."

Both Buffalo Bill and Mr. Markham laughed at the advice of the worthy teamster, and the latter said:

"I don't know, sir, what your intention is, but I shall take care of your arms and clothing for you until you come to claim them."

Buffalo Bill made no reply, but, stepping to his saddle pocket, drew forth what appeared to be a bundle of hair.

But, upon unrolling it, it proved to be a long, false beard, of almost the exact hue of that of Kio Carl.

"Curse you!"

The oath came from the guide, who had suddenly returned to consciousness, and readily understood what his enemy intended.

"Ha! ha! Kio Carl, I can play you pretty well, can't I?" and Buffalo Bill rumbled up his hair, put on the false beard, pulled the slouch hat over his eyes, and did look the very counterpart of the traitor guide.

Taking the weapons and horse of Kio Carl, and leaving his own in the care of Mr. Markham, he rode away once more, and so much resembled the traitor guide that the rest of those in the train, seeing him depart, believed that for some reason, Buffalo Bill had returned and set the prisoner free.

After watching him for some moments, in company with the teamster and the prisoner himself, Mr. Markham rode on after the train, and all were surprised at the change which had taken place, and which Seedy Sam, the wagon driver, explained in his quaint way to his pards while Madge heard from her father's lips what had occurred.

CHAPTER III.

BUFFALO BILL'S PLOT.

It was very evident that in changing his clothes for those of Kio Carl, Buffalo Bill intended some bold ruse, and his words as he rode along, spoken half-aloud, showed what his intention was.

"I am confident," he muttered, "that old Black Face lies concealed in the timber yonder, with a score or two of braves, and Carl was leading the train into the ambush, and was to share the spoils with the redskins."

"Great Heavens! What a fate that beautiful girl would have suffered!

"I shudder to think of it, and, if I am right, Kio Carl will do no more harm in this world, once I lay my clutch upon him again.

"Now I'll see if I am right before the sun is set half an hour, and if my rig will bear muster with old Black Face."

He then rode quietly on, the timber ahead of him rising dark and threatening, and his keen eyes searching its depths for some sign of a foe.

As the sun touched the distant prairie horizon, he was within a mile of the timber, which jutted out from the river to a considerable distance, and formed a secure hiding-place for a thousand savage foes within the shadow of its large trees and thickets.

After a long and untiring peering into the timber, Buffalo Bill was rewarded by discovering a moving form.

"Injun!"

The word escaped his lips like an exclamation, and peering still more closely, he continued:

"As I thought, Kio Carl meant deviltry.

"Ah! There come several of the red rascals to meet me, or, rather, to meet him, as they believe, or I am mistaken.

"Now, Buffalo Bill, look out!"

With a light laugh, as though he relished and defied the great danger he was running, Buffalo Bill arranged his toilet more to his taste, as he deemed it necessary, looked to his arms, and rode quickly along the timber.

Five horsemen had come out of the timber, and were riding leisurely toward the scout, as if to meet him, and yet exhibiting toward him no hostile demonstrations.

They were Indians, in all their glory of war-paint and feathers, and one rode slightly in advance of the other four.

"The devil himself, as I live!" said Buffalo Bill.

Then in a moment he added:

"Old Black Face has noticed that the train has turned back, for he evidently had lookouts in the tree tops, and he is coming to ask me, or rather, Kio Carl, as he thinks, for the reason.

"Well, the train was too far off for him to see anything going on of a suspicious nature."

It was now growing dark, and when Buffalo Bill drew within a couple of hundred yards of the Indians, he was confirmed in his opinion that Kio Carl had turned traitor to his own race, and that Black Face was his ally in deviltry, for as yet no hostile sign was shown by the redskins.

Upon getting within a few lengths of the Indians, Buffalo Bill, imitating, as nearly as possible, and he was a good mimic, the voice of Kio Carl, called out at random:

"Does the Black Face frown at his white brother, that he brings not the train into the timber?"

"The paleface spoke crooked to the Black Face, to bring him here with his warriors."

"No."

"Yes, for his white brother came two suns ago and told the Black Face to be here.

"He came with his warriors and he saw the white chief

coming over the prairie, and far behind him the wheel-tepees of his people.

"Then the Black Face saw, and his warriors saw, that the paleface turned back to the wheel-tepees, and then they went toward the rising sun, on the trail they had come, while my white-brother comes on alone."

"The Black Face speaks of what his eyes have seen," said Buffalo Bill, speaking the Sioux tongue perfectly. "But he knows not what his brother has to say."

"The Black Face will listen," said the chief, evidently greatly disappointed at having seen the train turn back.

"Let the Black Face have his ears open."

"His braves, in the tree tops, may have seen a paleface runner, on horseback, join the train?"

"The braves of the Black Face said so."

"Aha! I'll make this old wretch tell me all he knows," muttered Buffalo Bill, while aloud he said:

"That was a horse brave of the paleface chief, sent to order the wheel-tepees back to the Platte, as many white soldiers are on the track of the Black Face."

The Indian chief started and glanced nervously at his warriors, while Buffalo Bill continued:

"The brother of the Black Face heard all, and he told the chief of the wheel-tepees which trail to take and where to camp, and sent word to the captain of the horse-braves that he would go on and find the Black Face and his warriors, and then come and tell them where to strike his village."

The old chief fairly shouted with rage at this bold assertion, failing to see that there was a pretended motive, and Buffalo Bill cried:

"Let the Black Face hear, for by telling the horse-braves of the whites this crooked story, he could come on and meet his red brothers, let them know where and when to strike the wheel-tepees, then go back and tell the paleface chief a false trail for his warriors to take, and lead them into an ambush which my brother here can have ready."

"Ugh!" said the Black Face, now seeing through the supposed ruse of his pretended ally.

"Ugh!" grunted the four warriors, delighted at the prospect of blood, booty and scalps before them.

"The Black Face has heard," said the chief, as though anxious to hear more and not willing to show curiosity to do so."

"I guess you have, you old villain, and if I don't fill that ugly head of yours full of lies, it will be because my tongue sticks to the truth too fast to pull it off," mentally observed Buffalo Bill, while aloud he continued:

"The Black Face knows the Lone Tree, toward the setting sun?"

"The Black Face has been there," was the pompous reply.

"Two suns from this the wheel-tepees will camp there."

"Ugh!"

"Let the Black Face creep upon the camp by night, leaving their ponies far out on the prairie, and his braves can do their work."

"Ugh!" and the grunt was one of satisfaction most intense.

"His brother will be there, and when the braves of the Black Face have many scalps at their belts, and their ponies are loaded with the booty of the palefaces, I will lead them on to the spot where the white warriors can be met in battle and defeated."

"Ugh! My white brother is a great chief. Let him come to my camp," said the delighted savage.

"No, for I must be off on the trail to seek the white chief."

"The White Panther, the paleface brother of the chief, is in the camp and would see him."

Buffalo Bill fairly started at the name, for he had long heard of the renegade white known as the White Panther, whose crimes had forced him to seek refuge among the redskins.

He knew him to be also a companion of Kio Carl, and did he meet him at once would his disguise be penetrated, and death would quickly follow, and death of the most awful torture that Indian cruelty could devise.

Remembering that Mr. Markham had told how Kio Carl had secretly met a white man on the prairie, he felt sure that White Panther, as the Indians called him, and Salt Lake Saul, as he was known in the settlements, must be that individual, who had gone on ahead, when his pard became the guide of the train, for no other purpose than to get old Black Face as an ally.

He knew that he had to be most cautious, not to betray ignorance, so asked, as a feeler:

"Why did not the White Panther come with my brother, the Black Face, to meet me?"

"The Panther has ridden hard, and was tired and asleep."

"Ah! but he must have eyes like the stars now, for at want him to guide the wheel-tepees to the Lone Tree."

"The Black Face will tell him."

"It is well, and I will start on the back trail. Let the Panther have a swift pony, and follow."

"It shall be as my white brother says," replied the old chief, and bidding the redskins farewell, Buffalo Bill started upon his return, greatly rejoicing at his discovery and the accomplishment of his plot.

He had gone but a short distance when he called back to the Black Face to bid the White Panther to hurry on after him, and there came back the answer:

"The Panther shall have my swiftest pony, and will soon be with my white brother."

"It will be a sad moment for him when he is, or I am mistaken," muttered Buffalo Bill, as he rode on his way, plotting mischief against the man on whose head a reward was offered as a renegade and a red-handed murderer.

The individual known as the White Panther was sleeping as serenely beneath the shelter of a tree, when Black Face returned to the timber, as though the blood of scores of whites whom he had murdered did not rest upon his guilty soul.

He had ridden hard that day, and in fact for several days had had but little rest, so he was glad to seek repose in security and dream of the booty he was to be a sharer in when the Markham train was at the mercy of the red demons who were his allies.

He was surprised when Black Face awoke him to make known that he had seen Kio Carl coming, and had met him out upon the prairie, and told him of the train going to the right-about.

"Durn them sogers!" he said, savagely. "They is allus pokin' round where they hain't wanted."

"But then, as it are, it are better, chief, fer ef we hed tackled ther train ther sogers w'u'd hev been too hot on our trail ter save ther booty, an' all we'd hey got w'u'd hev been sculps, which you Injuns prizes more'n we whites, onless we has a leetle revenge in ther biz."

All this was spoken in border English, which Black Face imperfectly understood, and could make no more appropriate reply to than that Kio Carl was a great chief, had done the Indians many good turns, and knew what

was best, and wished the White Panther to follow him at once, and go as guide to the wheel-tepees.

"Durnation! More ridin', and my horse already played!"

"The Panther shall have the pony of the Black Face," was the response of the chief, who knew that though his pony was a good animal, that of the renegade was a better one, though then tired out, and that in the end he would gain by his generosity.

"I'll make the swap, chief, fer I has my eye on a horse I seen on the train, afore it pulled out o' Omaha.

"Git out yer pony, an' I'll strike Carl's trail."

The pony soon had the saddle and trappings of the renegade upon him, and mounting, the villain set off at a swinging lope which threatened to soon overtake Buffalo Bill, did he not increase the pace at which he had ridden away.

An hour's gallop and he saw in the distance the dark forms of a horse and rider, and instantly he gave a shrill whistle.

"Ho, Saul! that you?" cried a voice, and the renegade replied:

"Yas, and I hes hed a lively gallop to overtook yer. Is yer ridin' fer a prize, Carl?"

"Yes, I am."

"Wall, what is ther stakes?" and the renegade drew rein, as his pony got head and head with the gaunt black ridden by Buffalo Bill.

"The stake is White Panther, alias Salt Lake Saul, as you see!"

The answer fell like a thunderclap from a cloudless sky upon the startled renegade, while he felt a revolver muzzle pressed hard against his heart.

Salt Lake Saul was a quick man with revolver and knife, and a hard one to surprise, as many had found out to their cost.

But he had been caught for once, and by one he deemed his devoted pard.

There must be some mistake; and he half-laughed forth:

"What in thunder does yer mean, Carl?"

"Just what I say," was the stern rejoinder.

"An' what did yer say?"

"That the stake I am now playing for is Salt Lake Saul, the renegade, and I have won it!"

"Durnation! Does yer think this are a place ter joke, pard?"

"Move one finger and you will find this is no joke, but deadly earnest."

"What hev I did ter turn yer agin me this way?"

"I am not Kio Carl."

"Holy Rockies! Then I are cotched!"

"Yes, the Panther is entrapped, at last. Hold, keep those hands away from your gun, or I pull trigger, and it's but an inch from your heart to my pistol muzzle."

"Durned ef yer hain't right! But who in thunder be yer thet looks like Kio, and yet hain't got his voice, now I obsarves?"

"Have you ever heard of Buffalo Bill?"

"Bitin' snakes o' Ireland! Is yer that terror?" almost howled the renegade.

"Yes, I am Buffalo Bill."

"Then ther dance's done, and ther fiddler's ter pay," was the almost resigned response.

"Yes, and Death's the fiddler."

"Don't doubt it, pard Buf'ler, and I'll soon hev a harp o' a thousan' strings to sing psalms o' glory on."

"Or a poker to stir up the fire below."

"Don't speak o' it, fer it makes me shiver to think how hot it are, and——"

Quicker than a flash of lightning he had dropped his hand upon a revolver butt, and it was half out of his belt, when Buffalo Bill clutched it and cried sternly:

"Hold on, sir, for I am your master!"

"Yer takes my hand, pard. I pass," said the disappointed renegade, and at an order to raise his hands above his head, he silently obeyed, while Buffalo Bill disarmed him.

"Now your claws are cut, we'll get along better together, and I want to be sociable, as I have some questions to ask you."

"Shout out fust how 'tis yer looks so like Kio Carl as ter take me in, and ther Black Face, too."

"Oh, that is simply a little game I played to find out what I wanted to know."

"An' yer did?"

"Yes."

"I hopes it will do yer no good."

"But it will, for I shall see you hang along with Carl."

"Hes yer got him, too?"

"I have."

"So I sees when I looks at thet hoss yer straddles. Waal, waal, we is both took in, and old Black Face made a dern fool of, too."

"You seem to feel better over the news?"

"I does, fer misery loves comp'ny, and I are miser'ble to a howling degree that are painful."

"You'll soon be out of your misery."

"I'd ruther be miser'ble, onderstandin' yer meanin' as I does. But tell me, Buf'ler, where hev yer got Carl?"

"Safe."

"And are I goin' there, too?"

"Yes."

"You is er liar!"

The right hand which had slipped into some mysterious pocket and quietly grasped a small repeater, was suddenly thrust forward right in the face of Buffalo Bill, and as the finger touched the trigger, the flash and the report came together.

But quick as was the act, Buffalo Bill succeeded in striking up the arm of the renegade, and the bullet tore along the top of his head, inflicting a scalp wound only.

Though slightly stunned by the shock and momentarily blinded, Buffalo Bill drew trigger, ere a second shot came from the renegade, and the wail of agony and hatred that broke from his lips told that the bullet had hit him hard.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR A FOE'S SAKE.

"And you think," said Madge, when her father had joined her and told of Buffalo Bill's having assumed the rig of Kio Carl, "that he will dare venture into the camp of the savages, pretending to be the guide?"

"Yes, my daughter, for from all I have heard of that famous man, I know he will hesitate at no risk to carry out his ends."

"How different he is from what I had pictured him, when reading romances of his stange deeds upon the border.

"He seemed to me, as the writers pen-painted him, a giant and ferocious being whose hands and clothing must be covered with the blood of his foes. But we find him an elegant gentleman, courtly and as handsome as a picture."

"He is indeed a remarkable man, Madge, and I sincerely hope he will come safely through all his dangers."

"It is certainly very noble of him to set aside his duties, which must be urgent, to get us out of the scrape into which that traitor guide led us."

"Oh, father, what if Buffalo Bill had not come on after us?" and Madge shuddered, while Mr. Markham answered:

"The thought of what would have followed, Madge, is terrible to contemplate."

And thus father and daughter talked on, until at last the new camping-ground was reached, and the tent was spread, which was especially for the use of Madge and Miss Samantha Doolittle.

In getting things to rights, preparing supper, and making himself generally useful, Pepper, the youth, was invaluable, and won pronounced praise from Miss Samantha.

"Madge," she said, "I do be thinking that Providence was most kind to that boy, to bring him under the shelter of our guardian wings."

"Or to us, auntie"—Madge always called Miss Doolittle auntie, though that lady had begged her to make it "cousin"—"for Pepper certainly has proven himself most useful in everything, and is really womanly in all he does for us."

"True, Madge, true, he almost seems to me like a woman, at times, but do you know you were sadly remiss to-day?"

"How so, auntie?"

"In your duty."

"What sin did I commit and what duty omit, pray?"

"You did not introduce me to that very elegant gentleman, Mr. Buffalo Bill."

"Why, auntie, I hardly met him myself, and I knew not who he was until Kio Carl spoke his name."

"Well, Madge, I don't know as I should, and I don't know but what I should have spoken to him without an introduction, under the circumstances, for I owed him our thanks for all he did."

"He did not seem to like thanks, auntie."

"True nobility, my dear, the truest kind, that avoids recognition for brave deeds done."

"If I were him, I don't know as I should, and I don't know but what I should do the same way; but——"

"Here's Pepper to announce supper," said Madge, glad to cut off the beginning of a few comments which Miss Doolittle always made lengthy when she began with "but."

The youth known as Pepper was almost a boy in years, or he seemed hardly twenty, and his face was one that few could gaze upon and fail to see that in it to admire and like.

He was dressed in a free and easy costume, and wore beneath his coat a belt of arms.

His hair, contrary to the border custom, was cut short, and his slouch hat had the rim pulled down all around.

"Miss Madge, supper is served, and Aunt Phyllis has made some of Miss Samanth's favorite hoecakes," he said, in a boyish voice, and with a mischievous twinkle of the eye.

"Oh, Pepper, why do you call me Miss Samanth, and never pronounce the last syllable?" cried the old maid.

"It's too much for me to tackle, miss, as I have a shortness of breath," replied the youth, and he led the way to the fire, where Mr. Markham was already seated at the table, upon which Aunt Phyllis, the negro woman, was placing a tempting meal.

Mr. Markham and the ladies sat down to supper, while Pepper busied himself in aiding Coon, the negro man, in getting things to rights for the night.

But there was one missing from the table, who each meal had sat with them, and that one was the guide.

In the goodness of her heart, Madge herself arranged a tray with his supper, and carried it to him, to where he sat upon the trunk of a tree, securely bound.

"I have come with your supper, sir," she said, quietly.

His head was bent, and at her words he looked up, and the firelight showed that his face flushed, while he said in his quiet way:

"You are very kind, Miss Markham; but one doomed to die cares little for food."

"But you are not doomed to die," said Madge, struck by his manner and the pathos in his voice.

"Ah! you little know that inhuman wretch, Buffalo Bill."

"He certainly does not look like the man you paint him."

"Looks are deceiving, Miss Markham, as you will find out when you know him better."

"It will take a great deal to make me believe that he

is other than an honorable man, for if his face lies, then where will we ever look for honor and virtue imprinted on the human countenance?"

"So I once thought, Miss Markham, and I loved Buffalo Bill as a brother.

"I had a happy home, and all about me to make life joyous; but, like the snake he is, he came into my household, and left only ruin, despair, and sorrow behind him. I sought revenge upon him, and here is his mark."

He drew aside his hair as he spoke, revealing a hole in his ear, evidently made by a bullet passing through.

After a moment he resumed, and his voice quivered:

"He called that 'his mark'; but, oh! he had left far worse scars on my heart. I came to the prairies to hide my sorrows, and here he has dogged me, and, with his plausible story, see how I am, while he has gone free.

"Soon he will return, and tell strange stories of me, saying he has verified all he said, and your father's trainmen will swing me up like a dog to die."

"No, they will not do that; but a trial will be given you," said Madge, earnestly.

"There is no justice on this border, Miss Markham, excepting such as is administered from the muzzle of a revolver and the point of a knife."

"But my father will see that you do not suffer innocently."

"Miss Markham, your father is a just man, but the men who are now his teamsters are cowboys, and a wild set, who love turmoil rather than peace, and Buffalo Bill will soon set them upon me like a pack of hounds, while your father will be powerless to aid me."

"But surely he will not do this wrong?"

"He surely will, and worse, as he has done in the past."

"But remember the splendid name he has won along the border as the foe of evildoers, and he is the bulwark that stands between the settler and the cruel redskins."

"The stories of novelists, Miss Markham, I assure you. But I can do nothing, so will say no more."

He bowed his head, and Madge was deeply impressed with all she had heard.

She believed Buffalo Bill honorable and noble and the guide guilty, but still there might be the shadow of a doubt to both beliefs, and he was entitled to the doubt until proven wicked.

"Answer me," she said, with stern abruptness. "Why did you leave the regular trail?"

"As I told your father, Miss Markham, to flank a band of redskins."

"But Buffalo Bill said there were no Indians on the regular trail, and there were many on the way we were going."

"It is but a question between us, Miss Markham. When I am dead and beyond recall to earth you will find that I was the one sinned against."

"If I could believe this, I would at once set you free," she said, in her earnest, impulsive way.

His eyes flashed, and he dropped his head, the more to hide his thoughts, which surged through his brain like a torrent.

After a while he seemed to have decided his course, and said in his low, really soft tones:

"Miss Markham, as a man who stands looking down into his own grave, you will forgive me for what I say to you.

"I say it asking no mercy at your hands, but only to prove to you that I am innocent of the charge against me.

"Will you hear me?"

"Yes."

"And forgive me?"

"What have I to forgive?"

"That which I have to say to you."

"I will hear you."

"I will only say then, that when a man of my strong nature loves, he would risk life, all, for the one who has won that love, and face death a thousand times to shield her from harm.

"My love may have made me overcautious, but loving you as I confess I do, I did all in my power to shield you from harm, and would have gone hundreds of miles out of my way, rather than have had an Indian fire upon this train.

"I have only to say, Miss Markham, that thus loving you I could not have willfully led you into danger."

Madge Markham fairly trembled at the words of the man.

She had seen that he liked to be with her, yet, even in her short life, she had received so much homage from men, which her beauty, wit and lovely character commanded, she had not noticed that he felt for her more than friendly regard.

His confession of love, coming as it did from a man in his situation and deadly peril, fairly stunned her.

She felt pained, deeply so, for what could she say in return, not even liking him, in spite of her admiration for the manly qualities he had exhibited in their few weeks' acquaintance? For the daily marches of the train had not averaged many miles.

There was one thing this confession did, and that was just what Kio Carl had aimed at.

That was, it caused her to doubt the guide's guilt, and to feel a germ of suspicion against Buffalo Bill, after all she had heard against him from the lips of the prisoner.

Madge was impulsive, and her feelings frequently prompted her to act immediately, so she said, after a moment of silence:

"If you can be so base as to be deceiving me, may God forgive you."

"Ha! Then there is in your heart a return of the affection I feel——"

The man's eager tones were checked by her quick and cold words:

"No! no! no! Do not misunderstand me, sir, for I meant not to imply that I cared for you, for on the contrary, I do not; but if you are so base as to have said you loved me, merely to touch my sympathy for you, I repeat, may God forgive you."

He seemed disappointed, and said in an injured tone:

"You are unkind to doubt me after such a confession."

"I will, acting upon that confession, believe you innocent, and if you pledge yourself to return within the month and prove yourself innocent of the charge against you to my father, I will set you free."

He started and answered:

"And if I so prove myself innocent, what may I expect from you?"

"Nothing more than the pleasure I will feel in having saved an innocent man from the death which you say will be visited upon you."

"And that is all?"

"All."

"No more?"

"You have heard me, sir, and I have nothing more to say."

She took from her pocket, as she spoke, a knife, and quickly severed the bonds that held him fast.

"Now, you are free, and I advise you to lose no time in making your escape, which can easily be done while the men are at supper.

"Good-by, sir, and if I do wrong, Heaven forgive me; right, I will have my own reward."

She turned away, as she spoke, and, though he called after her, she did not stop, but continued on to her tent, while he, with a sinister, triumphant smile, glided away into the shadows of the timber, sprang upon the back of the first horse he came to and rode off upon the prairie.

CHAPTER V.

THE RETURN.

When Seedy Sam went to make his prisoner secure for the night, by tying him more firmly to a tree, and sleeping by his side, a yell of surprise alarmed the camp, and brought all to the spot, excepting Madge and Miss Doolittle.

The two ladies remained at their tent, the old maid hattering like a parrot with alarm, and longing over and over again for the coming of "Mr." Buffalo Bill.

"What is it, Pepper?" she asked, excitedly, as the lad came back from the scene, followed by Coon and Phyllis.

"Satan's broke his chains, Miss Samantha," was the reply.

"You naughty boy! What do you mean now?" asked the elderly maiden.

"Miss Sum'tha, de boy do mean dat de prizner hav'nt got loose, so he hav'," said Phyllis.

"Oh, catch me!" yelled Miss Samantha, staggering backward toward Pepper.

But Pepper stepped aside, and Miss Doolittle had a fall that made her false teeth rattle and her "store curls" quiver.

"Lordy! chile, what fer yer let Missy Sum'tha take a tumble like dat?" cried Coon, springing forward, and placing Miss Doolittle on her feet again, and who said faintly:

"Have I been in a faint long?"

"Not an instant, I assure you, Miss Doolittle, as I also promise you there is no cause for you to faint, for I set the prisoner free," said Madge, coldly.

"Madge, my child, what is this I hear?" cried Mr. Markham, just then approaching the tent.

"I hear, father, that Kio Carl pledged his word that the scout accused him of treachery through his hatred of him, and that to save a life, that might have to suffer innocently, I set the guide free, and he is to come to your

ranch within the month and prove that he was not guilty."

"Madge!" exclaimed Mr. Markham, wholly bewildered at the bold act of his daughter.

"Kio Carl will never prove his innocence, Miss Madge."

The remarks came from Pepper, in low, earnest tones, wholly different from his usual light manner of speaking.

"Ah! how romantic of you, Madge. I do wish that I—but, no, I don't know as I should, and I don't know but what I should have done the same; but——"

"Pepper, go and tell Seedy Sam to come here," said Mr. Markham, cutting Miss Doolittle off short.

In a moment the teamster appeared, followed by his comrades, who were crowding around him.

One glance at the group, and Madge Markham realized how quickly was border justice and injustice dealt out upon that far prairie, for she saw around the neck of Seedy Sam a lariat, and that his arms were pinioned behind him.

Instantly she sprang forward and dragged the noose from his neck, and with the same knife that had set free Kio Carl severed the lariat that bound his hands behind him.

"What does this mean?" she asked, sternly, while her eyes flashed fire, and her face as seen by the firelight was flushed and angry.

"He sot ther priz'ner loose, miss, an' we were goin' ter string' him up," said one.

"It is no such thing, for I set Carl free, not wishing to see a man die who swore he was innocent," was the ringing response.

"Pards, yer hears her talk, an' I guesses yer takes a back seat now, while Seedy Sam shouts thankfulness to this heur lady fur savin' him from bein' histed." And that worthy individual, who in ten minutes more would have been innocently hanged, stepped forward, doffed his hat, and bowed low before Madge, who answered:

"I am sorry my act should have so endangered your life, and also that your comrades are so ready to kill upon a mere suspicion of guilt. If any one must suffer, I am the one."

"An' I guesses ther pilgrim that says a word ter yer gits choked with a bullit," said Seedy Sam, picking up his belt of arms, which one of the crowd had dropped,

and glowering around upon those who had so nearly ended his life

But the teamsters were abashed by the mistake they had made and were only too glad to skulk away, threatening to get Seedy Sam drunk, as a way of asking his forgiveness for the error they had committed.

As to Mr. Markham, he knew not what to say or do as Madge kissed him good-night and silently entered her tent, whither Miss Samantha quickly followed, leaving the father seated by the fire brooding over what had occurred, and wondering what motive could have prompted his daughter to do as she had done.

"Good God! Can she love him?" he groaned aloud as the thought flashed through his mind.

The members of the train went to their blanket-beds that night with something to ponder over, from Seedy Sam, who thought of his escape, and his comrades, who could not decide upon the motives of Madge in releasing the prisoner, down to her father, who feared he had solved that motive, and Coon and Phyllis, who talked it over as they dropped asleep.

The following morning, as the savory smell of broiling antelope-steaks was wafted through the timber, the teamster acting as sentinel called out that a horseman was in sight.

Soon after he cried:

"Thar is two of 'em!"

The excitement in the camp at once grew great, for they knew not what danger they had to confront.

But it was but a short time before Madge, looking through her glass, cried:

"It is the guide coming back, mounted upon his own horse, while he leads another animal, upon the back of which is a heavy load, apparently."

Her father took the glass, and said, after glancing through it:

"That is not the guide, Kio Carl, my daughter, but Buffalo Bill in his clothing."

"Oh, yes, I had forgotten that he disguised himself to look like the guide, father."

"What, is it that elegant gentleman, Mr. Buffalo Bill?" cried Miss Doolittle, primping up her curls.

"It certainly is, Miss Samantha," answered Mr. Markham.

"I am so glad, and I hope, Madge, that you will not be so remiss as to fail to present him to me."

"I will not forget it, auntie; but, father, do you observe anything strange about the burden the led horse bears?"

Mr. Markham looked attentively through his glass for full a moment, and answered:

"Yes, Madge."

"Well, sir?"

"It is a human being."

"So I thought."

"Laws sakes, and the poor critter is tied to the horse!"

"Yes, Miss Samantha, and he is either badly wounded or——"

"Dead," added Madge, as her father paused.

All who had heard the conversation now gazed with interest upon the coming horseman, and as he drew near they could distinctly see that the led horse carried human form, yet whether dead or alive it was hard to tell.

Nearer and nearer the two horses came, until presently Buffalo Bill drew rein near the tent, and politely raised his hat to the ladies, while Mr. Markham said:

"Glad to see you back, scout, and I hope you bring good news."

"I bring you a wounded prisoner, sir, the companion of Kio Carl," and Buffalo Bill threw aside the false beard he wore, sprang to the ground and approached the horse, which was a spotted Indian pony. Upon the back of the pony Buffalo Bill had arranged blankets so as to form a kind of resting-place for the wounded man, whose face was white and pinched, as with great anguish.

His feet and arms had then been so bound as to hold him in position, and though he had suffered fearfully every step of the horse, he had borne up bravely through the long night's ride.

The teamsters and all the camp had now gathered around, and Buffalo Bill said:

"Make me up a bed for him as soon as possible."

This was quickly done, and, aided by Seedy Sam, the scout raised the wounded man from the back of the pony.

"Gently, pard Bill, fer yer bullit hunted deep, an' ain't no child ter groan at a trifle," he said, as his face became livid, when Buffalo Bill laid him upon the hastily-constructed couch.

"He is most severely wounded, I see," said Mr. Markham, in a sympathetic tone.

"He has his mortal wound, sir," was the calm reply.

"Can he not live?"

The question came timidly from Madge.

"Not an hour longer, miss."

"Introduce me, Madge, for I wish to speak to the famous scout, and ask him a few questions," said Miss Doolittle, driving her sharp elbow into the side of the maiden.

But Madge was gazing sorrowfully upon the dying man, and, seeing that an introduction was not to be had just then, Miss Doolittle made a low courtesy, gave a smirk, and said:

"Pardon my speaking to you, great scout, without formal presentation, and let the circumstances under which we meet be my excuse for my boldness, for I don't know as I should, and I don't know but what I should but——" Here she gave the usual pause, and Mr. Markham

he coughed, Madge turned away, and Coon was heard to say in a low tone:

"Golly, but she am a talker!"

"But," repeated Miss Doolittle, in a louder tone, "will you kindly inform me, sir, if that poor suffering mortal was slain by the aborigines?"

"Don't toot yer horn too lively, old gal, fer I hain't dead yet," came from the wounded man, and in spite of himself Buffalo Bill smiled; but checking the laughter that came upon his lips, he said:

"No, miss; this man was wounded by myself."

"You shot him?" and Miss Doolittle grew faint.

"I did, madam."

"He shouts truth, old gal, an' yer may set him down as havin' kilt me, fer I got it heur; but I don't blame him, ef he hedn't been quicker than I were, he'd 'a' been at on the prairie now."

All looked at the wounded man, and then at Buffalo Bill, who stood calmly gazing down upon the one whom he had wounded unto death.

"Can nothing be done for him, sir?" asked Madge.

"Nothing, miss."

"Who is he, sir?"

The question came from Mr. Markham, and in response Buffalo Bill said:

"He is—but ask him, sir."

The wounded man heard the query and reply, and answered for himself:

"Has yer ever heard o' Salt Lake Saul, pard?"

"I must confess I have not."

"Perhaps ef I sling my t'other handle at yer, yer'll know it."

"Has yer heer'd o' ther White Panther?"

"A renegade said to be the ally of the Indians?"

"Yas."

"And do you claim to be that monster, of whom so much that is wicked has been said?" asked Mr. Markham, in a tone of horror, while Madge shrank back with a shudder, for she, too, had heard of the White Panther.

"No more dodgin' ther truth, pard, fer Buf'ler thar shows me."

"I are Salt Lake Saul, ther White Panther," and the dying man cast his eyes around the group to see the effect of his words.

All remained silent, and he continued, while each moment his voice grew weaker:

"I am thet pilgrim, what Buf'ler hes left o' me, and as he taxed him to fetch me to camp to see my old pard, Kio Carl, afore I die, he patched up this hole in my side, and afore I are, so trot out Kio, or I'll leave ther life trail afore he sees me."

"He wishes to see the prisoner, Carl, alone for a few moments, and I see no reason why we should refuse the

request of a dying man," said Buffalo Bill, as all looked at each other, and no one spoke in reply to the request of Salt Lake Saul.

Mr. Markham's face flushed, and he looked worried; but before he could reply, Madge stepped forward and said, in her clear tones:

"The guide, Carl, is no longer in camp, sir, for I released him last night."

Buffalo Bill was taken aback, it was evident, and he arched his eyebrows and looked to the maiden for an explanation, while the dying man shouted forth:

"Are this a leetle game to keep me from seein' Kio?"

"I assure you it is not. Kio Carl swore to me that he was innocent of the charge this gentleman made against him, and to save him from death, which he said would be his fate, I set him free."

"My dear young lady, you have made the saddest mistake of your life, for, upon your own track, you have loosened a bloodhound that knows no mercy to man or woman."

Buffalo Bill spoke the words in an impressive manner that caused every particle of blood in the face of Madge Markham to recede in a torrent upon her heart, and for a moment she felt as though she would faint.

But recovering herself quickly, by a great effort, she said, in a low tone:

"I believed him innocent, from all he said to me."

"This man, if he will, can tell you if he is guilty or not. Will you speak, Salt Lake Saul?"

All waited breathlessly for the answer of the dying man.

He professed to be the friend of Carl, and he had long been the foe of Buffalo Bill.

Would his hatred of the scout cause him to protect Kio Carl with his last breath?

If he said that the guide was innocent, then Madge would feel that he had told the truth in speaking against Buffalo Bill.

She wished to feel that she had not done wrong, and yet she found it hard to believe that such a man as Buffalo Bill's face showed him to be could be playing a deep game against the guide.

Buffalo Bill seemed the most unconcerned of all present, and as he hesitated, he asked:

"Will you answer, Saul, as to the guilt of your pard?"

"What does yer wish ter know?"

"Is he not, like yourself, a renegade?"

"It are safer fer him ter live among Indians than white folks, an' thar are settlements he don't go in, onless he are disguised."

"Is that sufficient, miss?" and the scout turned to Madge, who, without glancing at him, addressed Salt Lake Saul:

"Will you allow me a few questions, sir?"

"Yas, ef I hes time ter answer 'em; but wimmen is awful an' ongodly cur'us, an' maybe I mout die afore I kin answer 'em all."

In spite of herself, Madge smiled, but asked:

"Was it the intention of our guide to lead us into the power of the Indians?"

"It were."

Madge started, and again asked:

"He, then, was their ally?"

"Fact, fer I were his pard, an' he were ter take you as his prize, an' me an' Black Face an' ther bucks were ter hev ther booty."

"Oh, what have I done?" cried poor Madge, and turning to Buffalo Bill she said pleadingly:

"I humbly ask you to forgive me, sir."

"I have nothing to forgive, Miss Markham, for myself; but it is yourself and those of the train that will be the sufferers," and Buffalo Bill bent over the dying man and said kindly:

"Is there nothing I can do for you, pard, for I will gladly execute any request you have to make?"

Salt Lake Saul's manner at once changed, and a bright light seemed to come over his face, while he dropped at once on the border slang, and said in a full voice:

"Buffalo Bill, you are a true man, and I will trust you."

"I have long been a villain, and from bad to worse have I gone until I die now, a renegade, a thief and a murderer."

"Could man be worse?"

"Don't speak of that now," said Buffalo Bill, in the same gentle, almost womanly softness of manner that showed the great scout in a new phase, by no means calculated to lessen him in the esteem of those who saw and heard him.

"You gave me my death wound, Buffalo Bill, and I thank you for it, for you have saved me from the gallows, and I will prove my forgiveness by leaving you a duty to perform."

"Around my waist, when I am dead, you will find a leather belt, in which are some valuable papers, and a little money."

"A confession there from me will tell who I am and what you are to do with the papers."

"Will you do this for me?"

"I will."

"Then I am content. Give me your hand, even if yours is honest and mine is crime-stained."

Buffalo Bill grasped the hand of the dying renegade, and kneeling by him, thus remained.

The eyes of Salt Lake Saul closed, a smile even came over his face, and soon the grip on the scout's hand tightened and then relaxed. He was dead!

CHAPTER VI.

BUFFALO BILL'S GAME TO WIN.

It was not long, after Saul Lake Saul died, before Buffalo Bill transferred the leather belt, unexamined by him, to his own waist, and told Mr. Markham that it was necessary for him to be at once on the march.

A grave was hastily dug, the body of the renegade placed therein, and the train pulled out for the Plains trail, once more, Buffalo Bill again in his own clothing, and mounted on his own horse, while Madge rode Calamity black, as the treacherous guide had, in making his escape that night, very meanly stolen the horse of the one who had set him free, in return for her kindness, for he well knew the speed and bottom of the animal.

Having set Mr. Markham on the trail with full directions what to do and where to camp, Buffalo Bill waved a farewell to the ladies—a salute Miss Doolittle took to be a kiss of the hand to her, and returned it vigorously from her fingertips—and started off across the prairie with a swinging gallop.

The noble animal seemed almost tireless, and the rest he had had while with the train made him feel perfectly fresh, so that mile after mile was thrown behind him with wonderful rapidity.

It was a long and hard ride to Fort Kearney, but the horse was fully equal to it, and shortly after nightfall the lights of the fort came into sight.

"Halt! Who comes?"

The challenge of the sentry rang out clear and steady, and Buffalo Bill drew rein while he answered:

"Scout with important news for the commandant."

"Dismount, advance, and give the countersign," turned the sentry.

"I have no countersign, so call the corporal of the guard, and have him take me to the colonel, for I have no time to lose," answered the scout, impatiently, muttering to himself as the soldier obeyed:

"Military discipline and red tape are well enough in times, but not when a fellow is in a hurry."

It was some moments before Buffalo Bill was ushered into the presence of the commandant at Fort Kearney, who gave him a hearty welcome.

"Well, Cody, you don't mean to say that even you have ridden to Omaha and back since you left here going east."

"No, colonel."

"Indians ran you back to the shelter of the fort, eh?"

"Not exactly, sir, and yet they are the cause of my coming."

"Indeed, I knew of none being along the trail east of here."

"Nor are there any, sir, immediately upon the trail, to

discovered a train trail going up the north fork of the up, and knowing that it would lead directly into old Black Face's country, and seeing how small was the force, took the liberty of disobeying orders, as I knew the contents of the dispatches, and that a few days' delay would do no harm, and I followed on."

"You take big chances in disobeying orders, Cody, but feel you deemed it of greater importance than to press," said the colonel.

"Had I not, sir, I would have gone on."

"But I overtook the train and discovered it to belong to Mr. Markham, who with his daughter and another lady, servants and cowboys, the latter acting as teamsters, is going to the Waller Ranch on the Platte, which he has lately purchased."

"I knew that Waller had been in correspondence regarding its sale."

"And Mr. Markham bought it, fitted out his train in Omaha, and employed as a guide none other than Kio Carl."

"Ha! That devilish renegade and road agent?"

"None other, sir, and he has a pard, Salt Lake Saul—"

"Another precious scoundrel."

"Yes, sir, during his lifetime," was the significant reply.

"You hint that he is dead."

"He is."

"What was the nature of his illness?" and the colonel smiled.

"I killed him, sir."

"I expected that, Cody, for you generally distribute your bullets when and where they are most needed."

"But there is a cool thousand offered for his head, dead or alive."

"You are in luck."

"I don't care for blood money, colonel; but, as I was telling you, Salt Lake Saul had gone on ahead of Carl and the train, to post old Black Face, who was to be in ambush at a certain timber motte."

"A rare plot of devilry!"

"Which I am glad to say I thwarted, for upon coming up with the train, I found Carl had gone on ahead to prepare camp, he said, and I told Mr. Markham he was being led into a trap, got him to set one for the guide, and he came back and fell into it."

"Killed him, too, Bill?"

"No, sir."

"What a pity!"

"I only wish I had, sir, but I took his rig, and starting the train on the back trail, with him a prisoner, made up Kio Carl, so as to fool Black Face, and went on to the timber, where he lay in ambush with just fifty braves, I afterward found out."

"You were foolhardy, Cody."

"Oh, no, colonel, only a little risky, but I met the old redskin, played Kio Carl on him, and fooled him well, and discovering that Salt Lake Saul was back in the timber, told Black Face to send him on after me, made up a tough yarn, and put back to the train."

"Salt Lake Saul followed me, mistook me for Carl, his pard, discovered his mistake when I had the drop on him, but showed his panther claws, and I shot him."

"But I did not kill him then, but carried the plucky fellow on to the camping-ground of the train, and though he suffered untold agony, he did not utter a groan."

"To my horror, I found that Kio Carl had escaped, and after burying Saul, who died an hour after reaching camp, I put the train on the right trail and came on here."

"You have done well, Cody, but why did you not go on to Omaha with the dispatches, and make this known on your return?"

Buffalo Bill smiled and answered:

"Because, colonel, my little game is not yet played out to the winning point."

"There is something else to tell, then?"

"No, sir; but to do."

"What do you mean?"

"I made an appointment with old Black Face."

"Ah!"

"I told him, in my then character of his renegade ally, Kio Carl, that the train was to be at Lone Tree at a certain time, and to there creep upon it, and attack it, while a squadron of troopers were then moving upon him, supposing him to be elsewhere than where he then was."

"I see."

"The Lone Tree, as you know, is a rise in the prairie, where there is a good stream of water, a thicket of cottonwoods, and that one large tree."

"Yes, I have camped there."

"The grass is deep surrounding it and the Indians can readily creep upon the camp and surprise it."

"True."

"Well, sir, I thought it would be a good idea to start out at once a couple of ambulances, a few wagons, and several mounted men, and send them at once to the Lone Tree."

"To be surprised by the redskins?"

"No, sir."

"What then?"

"To surprise the redskins."

"I confess I am on a blind trail, Cody."

"The wagons and ambulances, sir, can be full of soldiers, and the horses can be those belonging to the troops."

"When they go into camp, the horses can all be saddled and ready for mounting, the soldiers lying in ambush, and

when Black Face and his braves rush on the encampment, expecting to surprise a train with a few women and a half-score of men, they can be met by half-a-hundred cavalymen."

"Cody, you are a trump!" cried the enthusiastic colonel.

"Then play me at the game with old Black Face, and from there I will go on to Omaha, with the dispatches, and only be about three days late, for to-morrow night is the time I appointed with the chief."

"But may not Kio Carl, who you say escaped from the train, have reached Black Face, and thus let the cat out of the bag?"

"No, sir, for I followed his trail, and it led southward, and, besides, as I started Black Face from his ambush in the timber, and have ridden hard myself, Carl cannot reach the redskins before they make their attack."

"Well, Cody, this is a glorious plan of yours, and I will send Captain Burr with you within an hour."

"We must start as soon as possible, sir."

"You shall, for you wish to strike the trail Markham's train would be on, so as to deceive the redskins, should they be on the watch. But may not the Markham train come along, too?"

"No, sir, for I told Mr. Markham my plan, and directed him how to proceed, and where to camp."

The colonel touched a bell, an orderly appeared, and he was sent after Captain Dangerfield Burr, a handsome, dashing cavalry officer, who readily entered into the plot, and used such dispatch in getting off that the sham settlers' train pulled out of Kearney in one hour after the arrival of Buffalo Bill at the fort.

The next day, gazing from a distant point, and concealed in a clump of cottonwoods, an Indian warrior was watching a small wagon train filing across the prairie.

His eyes sparkled as he observed its course, and instinctively he dropped his hand upon his scalping-knife, as though in anticipation of the red deeds to be done when darkness settled down upon the face of the earth.

Toward a rise in the prairie, where was one large tree and numerous small ones, looking like a giant and his children, the train held its way, and within its shelter came to a halt, just as the sun touched the western horizon of the plain.

The Indian lookout still continued to gaze upon the glimmering white tilts of the wagons, lighted up by the last rays of the setting sun, and remained like a statue of bronze, his eyes riveted upon the scene, until he saw the rosy hue of camp-fires cast their radiance out from the thicket.

Then, wheeling his pony, he urged him to full speed, and for a few miles seemed to fly over the darkening prairie.

After a ride of half an hour he came upon a winding

stream, the banks of which were fringed with cottonwoods, and down this he turned until he rode into the timber, wherein were visible, like shadowy specters, the forms of horses and their riders.

"What has Good Eye to say?" asked a deep voice, the Indian lookout sprang from his panting pony.

"The wheel-tepees have camped in the shadow of Lone Tree," was the calm reply, although from the manner in which the savage had ridden, it would have been more natural had he blurted out exactly the information he bore.

A satisfied grunt was uttered by the first speaker, echoed by a score of others, and then came the question, "How many wheel-tepees?"

The Indian courier silently indicated the number, holding up as many fingers as there were wagons.

"The paleface spoke with a straight tongue. Let the braves mount their ponies and be ready."

It was the same one who had spoken before who gave the command, and as he rode out of the shadow of the timber upon the open prairie, the lingering light in the west revealed that it was Black Face, the Sioux chief.

As though he knew well the spot, he held his way directly toward the Lone Tree, as the place was called, where the Indian courier had seen the train go into camp.

A ride at a slow walk brought the band to the place where the lookout had sat upon his horse, gazing upon the train, and here a halt was made.

Dismounting, the Black Face securely tied his ponies and then looked to his arms, his example being followed by the others of the band.

"Let the Deer Foot and the Eagle go forward and see if the palefaces are asleep."

"We will wait their coming at the trail crossing."

The two braves, in obedience to the command of the chief, sprang away on foot and disappeared soon after the darkness, while Black Face and his braves, also leaving their ponies behind them, under one guard, set off to follow them.

They had been gone but a few moments, when the thud of hoofs on the prairie attracted the attention of the Indian sentinel over the ponies.

Attentively he listened, and soon discovered that the sound grew more and more distinct, and that whoever it was, his course lay toward the timber where the ponies were concealed.

There was but one horse, he knew from the sound, and gliding to the edge of the timber toward which he was approaching, the warrior unslung his rifle and waited with a courage and calmness that it would be well for our soldiers to imitate in times of danger when nerve was most needed.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNHEEDED WARNING.

Glancing out over the prairie, in the direction whence came the sound, the Indian guard's keen eyes soon caught sight of the form of a steed and rider approaching in the darkness.

The animal was keeping up the same steady gallop, and the rider did not seem to dread danger, from the manner in which he came on.

Presently, when within good gunshot range of the timber, he came to a halt and stood for an instant, evidently searching the length of the motte, as though to penetrate its dark depths and discover what awaited him there.

Then upon the air rose the sharp bark of the coyote.

It seemed to make no impression on the Indian guard, who remained as motionless as a stone.

Now came the long-drawn-out howl of the wolf, and still the Indian did not move, although it was evident that the strange horseman was giving signals by his imitations of wild beasts.

A moment of silence followed, and clear and ringing, the notes of a night bird were heard.

Then the Indian guard moved; his hands went to his lips, and the last signal was answered by the sharp bark of the coyote, which would have fooled an animal of that species himself.

Instantly the horseman came forward toward the timber, yet at a slow walk, and again halted within pistol range, and called out in the Indian tongue:

"*Min-na-wash-te?*"

"*Wash-te,*" came the reply of the Indian, and the horseman rode up to the timber.

"Kio Carl!" cried the Indian, recognizing the horseman.

"My red brother speaks true, and I have come hard upon the trail of the Black Face," was the answer of the rider, as he sprang to the ground to give rest to his tired horse, whose drooping head showed that he had been pressed hard.

"The chief is on the red trail, as my white brother told him," answered the Indian.

"The Black Face is not here, then?"

"No."

"Where is he?"

"The Bear Claw has spoken."

"His ponies are here," and Carl glanced around at the ponies hitched in the timber.

"The Bear Claw is their guard while the Black Face and his warriors have gone on the trail."

"But what trail, Bear Claw?" asked Kio Carl, evidently at a loss to understand the Indian.

"The trail of the wheel-tepees."

"Is there a train near?"

"Did not the Kio tell the Black Face that the wheel-tepees would camp at the Lone Tree, and that he must creep upon them as the snake in the darkness?"

"Redskin, you are badly off, for I told the Black Face no such thing."

"The paleface talks crooked now. Let him follow the trail of the Black Face. He will find him upon the prairie toward the Lone Tree."

"I'll go at once," said Kio Carl, leaving his horse in the timber, the same splendid animal which he had stolen from Madge Markham, and set out at a swinging trot upon the prairie.

He had gone about a mile when he suddenly stumbled over something in the deep grass, fell, and before he could resist was bound hand and foot.

"Is this the way for my red brothers to treat me?" he asked in an injured tone, recognizing the braves of Black Face.

The Indians gave a grunt of surprise, cut his bonds at once, and sent for Black Face.

"The Black Face welcomes his white brother. Has he just come from the paleface camp?" said the chief in his dignified way, for an Indian shows dignity, even in cutting a throat.

"My brother's eyes are blind, his ears are not right, his feet follow the wrong trail," said Carl, impressively.

"It is the trail my white brother told me to follow."

"Not so, chief, for I have been a prisoner, and the timber where I expected you to ambush the train, and sent you word by the White Panther, is far from here. Did not the White Panther see the Black Face?"

"Yes, and told him all the Kio had said; but does the Kio trifle with the Sioux?"

"No, it was all as I told the White Panther to make known to you, but Buffalo Bill, the paleface *Pa-c-has-ka*—here a general grunt was given, and there was a hand dropped on every knife-hilt—"came to the train; told the chief I was the ally of my red brothers and I was seized and bound.

"But a paleface maiden, one who is yet to be my squaw, set me free, and I have come on the trail of the Black Face to tell him where to strike the wheel-tepees."

The Indians, from the chief down, looked at each other in utter amazement, while Black Face said sternly:

"The Kio's tongue is crooked to talk so to the Sioux. They have eyes, and are not smitten by the Great Spirit here," and he placed his hand upon his head as a means of indicating that he was no fool.

"The Kio speaks true, and again tells the Black Face that the train is far from here."

"The Kio is like a snake, for he would strike his red brother, when he knows the wheel-tepees are there," and he pointed toward the Lone Tree encampment.

"That is not the camp of my people," firmly said Kio Carl.

"The Kio tells lies," was the savage rejoinder, and the acquiescing grunt of the braves showed that they thought so, too.

Kio Carl dropped his hand upon his pistol, but realizing how unequal would be a combat, he said, indifferently:

"There may be a camp there, and there is, for I see the fires, but it is not the camp of my people."

"Did not the Kio tell me they would be there?"

"No."

"Did he not tell me to come here with my braves and creep upon the wheel-tepees in the dark?"

"No."

"Does the Kio say that he did not come to my camp and tell me this?" and it was evident that Black Face was waxing wroth.

"I do say so, for I have not been in the camp of the Black Face, nor near it, for months.

"I sent White Panther to you, to tell you what to do; but as I was taken prisoner, I could not follow out my plan, and having escaped now, I come to the Black Face to lead him upon the train of my people."

"Does the Kio think that the Black Face and his braves are blind, and have no ears, that he tells them that he came not to their camp two moons ago?"

"I did not, I only wish I could have done so."

"Yet he talked with the Black Face, and then returned to his people, and the White Panther went after him, and the Black Face is here to follow his words."

"Look here, chief, when was this?" suddenly asked Kio Carl, as the truth now flashed upon him.

"Two sleeps ago."

"By the Rockies! It was Buffalo Bill!"

"The great white chief hides not his face under hair," and Black Face referred to the beard of Kio Carl, who answered, quickly:

"Yes, for he disguised himself to look like the Kio—put on his face a false beard.

"He has played with the eyes and poured lies into the ears of the Black Face and his braves.

"The great *Pa-e-has-ka* has set you upon a wrong trail, chief, and laid a trap into which you are walking, for yonder train is not that of my people, for I left it far across the prairies, toward the setting sun."

"And the White Panther?"

"I have not seen him."

"The Kio has a deep heart and he is throwing lies in the ears of the Black Face."

"I am not, chief."

"The Black Face does not trust him."

"All right, you infernally stubborn old redskin! Go your way and attack yonder train, and if you don't catch

a Tartar whose name is Buffalo Bill, you can set me down as the champion liar of the border, niggers, Chinese, and redskins included."

Black Face did not master all this, but he felt certain that he was being deceived.

He had, he believed, talked with Kio Carl face to face, and now he believed that he had some secret motive for not wishing to attack the train, and desired to fool him.

"The Black Face is no fool," he said, savagely.

"You'll find you are, if you rush against that train, for I am sure it is some trick of that devil, Buffalo Bill, to get you into a death grapple."

"Let my warriors bind the Kio, and soon the Black Face will show him how crooked is his tongue."

"All right chief. I'd rather be bound than go to fight yonder train," was the indifferent response of the man, who having seen that his warning was unheeded, seemed wholly satisfied to let the Indians find out the truth of what he had told them in their own way, and he laughed at the surprise he felt they would receive, as he was assured that Buffalo Bill had laid a trap into which they were going to fall with the greatest of ease.

Without the slightest resistance, Kio Carl submitted to being bound and was then laid upon the prairie, with the quiet remark from Black Face:

"When the palefaces' scalps hang at the belts of my braves, and we come back for our ponies, the Black Face will return for the Kio."

"You don't mean to leave me here all alone, chief?" asked Kio, with quick alarm.

The chief nodded.

"Leave a brave with me."

"The knots of the bonds are tied."

"Still I might escape."

"The Black Face will risk it."

"Chief, again I warn you not to attack that camp. It looks as though I had deceived you, but I have told you only the truth, as you will soon find out. Let one of your braves stay with me to set me free, when it is proven my words are true."

"No," and as the chief uttered the word the two warrior spies whom he had sent on ahead to reconnoitre, came up to him.

"What have my braves seen?" he asked.

"All the palefaces are asleep, and they keep no guard."

"Ugh! Now my paleface brother with the crooked tongue hears."

"Yes, and you'll hear more than you want to soon," muttered Kio Carl.

Leaving the renegade where he had been tied, Black Face called his warriors around him, and silently as specters they moved away in the darkness and disappeared.

For a quarter of a mile they glided rather than walked long, and then Black Face called a halt and gave a few orders in a low tone, which were passed along the line of grim savages.

Then, down upon their faces they fell, and like magic, disappeared from sight.

In the shelter of the few small trees surrounding the huge cottonwood were visible four smouldering campfires that had been deserted for the night, and the camp seemed buried in the deepest repose.

As the warriors, crawling like snakes through the grass, came nearer, their keen eyes detected on each side of the encampment what seemed to be a sentinel, leaning against a small tree, and their arrows were set to their bows, and soon each form had half-a-dozen shafts sent into it.

Without a groan from either, they sank upon the ground, and then with yells that were enough to strike terror into the stoutest heart, Black Face and his warriors rushed upon the camp.

The chief himself, ever foremost in the fight, bent above the form of one of the guards to tear off the scalp, when a cry of surprise burst from his lips, as he found not a human being, but a suit of clothes, and that stuffed with prairie grass.

But ere he had time to ponder upon this strange circumstance, out from behind the wagons poured a perfect stream of fire, and down in their tracks fell a score of red men, dead or dying, while cheer upon cheer of the soldiers broke upon the air and spread dismay among the red ranks.

Black Face had just time to remember the warning given him by Kio Carl, and to realize that the renegade's tongue had not been crooked in that instance, when he saw rushing upon him a number of soldiers, with carbines and sabres, and quickly and loudly he called to his braves to rally around him.

They obeyed promptly and met the attack bravely, although taken wholly by surprise; but when, out of the thickets where the train horses were concealed, there dashed a score of cavalymen with Buffalo Bill at their head, the savages gave one yell of terror, fired a volley at random, and bounded away over the prairie like a herd of deer.

With triumphant yells, the cavalry followed them, shooting them down here and there, and causing them, as the only means of safety, to scatter singly and in pairs, and thus continue their mad flight, or hide in the long grass.

With a horseman in hot pursuit, Black Face had an opportunity of realizing how thoroughly he had been whipped, and to mourn over the loss of two-thirds, if not all of his warriors, for he had seen that it would be a miracle almost if himself or any one of the band escaped.

As he ran along like a deer, holding his own pretty well against the horse of his pursuer, he heard a cry, and in the Sioux tongue.

It was:

"Let my red brother free me from my bonds, that I may escape."

He recognized the voice, and saw instinctively, half-seated on the ground, half-hidden by the grass, the form of Kio Carl.

Though he knew well that he had told the truth, and understood what a terror in battle Kio Carl was, he dared not then hesitate an instant to free him, while the thought came into his mind to free himself at the cost of the renegade's life.

Instantly he changed his course, and ran nearer the bound prisoner, to bring the pursuer upon him while following his trail, and as he dashed by, said:

"Let the Kio call upon his own people to set him free."

The next instant he had gone by like the wind.

But Kio Carl at once understood the dodge of the wily Indian, and hearing the horseman coming, threw himself over and over again in somersaults, until he had gone many feet from where he had been lying.

Then he came to a halt and wormed himself along in the grass until he was almost wholly concealed from view.

Just at that moment, the one in hot pursuit of Black Face, whose form he could indistinctly see in the distance, dashed by, and not twenty feet away from where Carl was concealed.

CHAPTER VIII.

BUFFALO BILL'S DOUBLE DUEL.

For some moments after, Kio Carl lay motionless, as though he feared the coming of others.

But as he heard no sound near, and the shouts of the soldiers and the trampling of horses far off, with an occasional shot, a cheer or a death yell, he rose again to a sitting posture.

His hands were bound behind his back, and a thong had connected them with his feet, which were also secured, so that he could not even stand upright.

Raising himself to a sitting position, he gazed around over the prairie, and could see dark forms of horsemen flitting here and there.

"They are pursuing some of the redskins toward the timber where they left their horses, but few can escape, I'll warrant," he muttered.

Toward the Lone Tree he saw that the camp-fires had been rekindled, and numerous forms were seen passing to and fro in the light of them, showing that the soldiers had been in considerable force.

"Well, I know this is a trick of Buffalo Bill's, for he is

up to just such plots, and he has hit old Black Face and his warriors hard, even if any of them gets away, which looks doubtful.

"Well, if Satan takes care of me, and I don't see why he should desert me now, I'll take good care to make all the capital I can out of this, and the Indians will trust me, too, well remembering my warning and how it was treated.

"But how to get out of this trouble myself is the question."

That indeed seemed the question, and yet, bound hand and foot as he was, with no one near to free him, enemies on all sides and far from help, even should they not find him, Kio Carl did not despair.

Suddenly he dropped down in the grass, for he saw a horse and rider approaching.

The animal was seen coming on at a walk, his head bent as though he was tired, and his course would lead him directly over Kio Carl, unless he again rolled away.

But Kio Carl knew that he was in a desperate situation and that he must take desperate measures to escape.

It might be a soldier that was coming toward him, one who had gotten astray from his comrades in the chase after Black Face and his warriors, and it might be an Indian.

Perhaps it was a scout from the command of Captain Burr.

Then the blood rushed hard to Kio Carl's heart as the thought flashed upon him that it might be Buffalo Bill.

If so he made up his mind to take no chances.

But if it was any one else, he would, now having one arm free, risk a shot with his revolver.

If he killed the horseman, he would have his horse, saddle and bridle, which would be everything to him as he then was.

So he was silent, prepared and watchful.

Nearer and nearer came the horseman.

It was a soldier, his horse coming along with head hanging low, and the rider apparently half-asleep.

Kio Karl saw that the horse would pass within a few feet of him, and he raised his weapon, took deliberate aim and fired.

The horse wheeled to one side, and the rider fell heavily from his saddle.

The poor fellow never saw his foe, for the bullet pierced his heart.

But with a death clutch he grasped his bridle and prevented his horse from running away.

With determined effort, Kio Carl at last freed his other hand and then went to where the horse was still held by his dead rider.

"Now, my time for revenge has come," almost shouted the man. "My time for revenge on Buffalo Bill, and then

to carry out my original plan and make Madge Markham my wife."

His words told what his evil intentions were toward the beautiful girl, who in her sympathy had set him free.

"Now, I'll take the Markham trail first, and hunt down Buffalo Bill later," he said, after having reached the body of the dead soldier and appropriated everything to his use.

He was disappointed to find the horse very tired, but felt that he had no right to grumble at his good fortune.

As he rode along Madge Markham was constantly in his thoughts.

He was determined to get her in his power by fair means or foul, and make her his wife whether she was willing or unwilling.

Her releasing him caused him to think in his vanity that he had won a warm spot in her heart, and should he be with her for a while he did not doubt that he could win her love.

The train being well on its way to the place on the Platte where was the ranch Mr. Markham had purchased, he felt that he must act promptly, and his only dependence was in his Indian allies.

But should he not be able to strike the train on the march he determined to go to the ranch, and the idea of giving up his fell purpose never entered his mind for an instant.

Having gained a safe distance from the camp, he drew rein to consider as to what he should do.

To go to the village of Black Face would be his safest course; but perhaps the old chief had been slain, and if so he had no influence with the other chiefs of the tribe.

What had become of White Panther, he could not conjecture, and, as he had been told by Black Face that the renegade had followed him from camp, he knew that it could only be Buffalo Bill he had gone after, and that meant certain death to his pard.

Then the little good in his nature swayed him here, and he muttered:

"Salt Lake Saul has thrice saved my life and risked his own to do it, and it is my first duty to see what has become of him, and to aid him if he needs it.

"If Buffalo Bill captured him he will be taken to Omaha to be identified for the price set on his head, and then his career will be cut short. The Omaha authorities offer the reward, and therefore there he'll be taken, so to Omaha I go to look after Saul, for the girl will be safe enough at that faraway ranch her father is so foolish as to take her to.

"So to Omaha I go, rig up in a new disguise, and then I can work in safety.

"Then, if I want aid, I will go to the village of Black

ce, and see what I can do to get some braves to aid me, and, if I have not the influence with the reds, Salt Lake Saul has, and he'll be glad enough to help me if I save his neck.

"Come, old fellow, our trail leads to Omaha," he said to his horse, and the head of the animal was at once turned in that direction, while his rider again muttered as he rode along:

"If Buffalo Bill captured old Salt Lake Saul he will go to Omaha to draw his reward, and I will be able to square accounts with him, as well as get my pard free, for, if that man was dead, I would have little to fear, as the soldiers would have no terror for me."

And, about the time Kio Carl came to this decision, the person of whom he was speaking was just leaving the Lone Tree camp on his ride to Omaha, to deliver to the commandant there the delayed dispatches. In the ambush fought by the Lone Tree Buffalo Bill had won the admiration of all the soldiers by his reckless courage and the certainty with which he got every Indian he went for.

When the redskins scattered he had pursued the larger force, most anxious above all things to capture Black Face, the daring chief who had so long been the bitter foe of the whites and had spread terror along the border by the raids he was wont to make with his picked warriors.

Still continuing to scatter, Buffalo Bill soon found himself in pursuit of but one redskin.

He was not mounted upon his own horse, having left him at the fort to rest, and the fugitive ran well, and seemingly untiringly, the nature of the ground being such that the scout's pony did not come up with him until a mile had been gone over.

Then, seeing that he would be overtaken and shot down, the redskin, panting from his tremendous race, grasped his tomahawk before he turned at bay, for he had thrown away his rifle to lessen his weight in running.

Then suddenly he paused, and the tomahawk, hurled with good aim, struck the scout's pony fairly in the head and brought him to earth with a suddenness that sent his rider far over his head.

Nimble as a cat, Buffalo Bill lighted upon his feet, and just as he did so grasped the Indian in his strong arms.

Expecting that the scout would fall with his horse, the Indian was taken by surprise, and, powerful though he was, Black Face was no match for the white man, especially as he was tired by his long run.

The struggle, therefore, was of short duration, and the result was that Buffalo Bill was the victor, the redskin lying dead at his feet.

But he did not tarry to gloat over his victory, but, tearing the feather head-dress from his victim, he put it on

his own head and started on a run for the timber, which was distant but a few hundred yards.

The guard who had halted Kio Carl earlier in the evening still held his post, and had been an alarmed witness of the attack in the distance, and the defeat of his red brothers, for he could hear enough to convince him that Black Face had caught a Tartar.

He had patiently waited to see further developments, well knowing that those of the band who escaped would head for the timber where their ponies were, and his quick eye had detected the forms of the Indian and his mounted pursuer.

Instantly he started to get a pony and go to the aid of his brother warrior, and he rode out of the timber just as he saw the Indian stand at bay, and the pony and his rider go down.

He could hardly repress the yell of joy that rose to his lips, yet did so, fearing that there might be other pursuers near.

The next instant he saw what he believed to be his fellow brave spring up from the prairie and come on toward the timber.

He looked closely to assure himself that it was not a foe, and recognizing the eagle feather head-dress fluttering down the back of the runner, he felt that it must be Black Face, his chief.

But it was Buffalo Bill, and this circumstance the redskin discovered too late to save his life, for, running directly up to him, the scout had him in his grasp and dragged him off his pony in an instant's time.

There was a glimmer of steel, a desperate struggle for a few seconds, and Buffalo Bill stood upright, holding the rein of the frightened pony, while at his feet lay the warrior, dead.

Springing upon the pony he had so pluckily captured, Buffalo Bill rode back to where his own animal lay, and quickly dispatched the wounded beast, for the tomahawk had not done its work fully.

Then, transferring his saddle and bridle to the new steed, the scout rode into the timber where the ponies were tied, and these were soon loosened and sent off at a gallop toward the camp at Lone Tree.

Hearing them coming, the soldiers, who had nearly all returned to camp, rallied to repel, as they believed, a charge; but, hearing Buffalo Bill's voice calling out to them, they did not fire, and up he dashed with his four-footed captives, to the great delight of Captain Burr and his troopers.

Having dismounted and corraled the ponies, Buffalo Bill, picking out one of the best of the lot that had belonged to the band of Black Face, bade farewell to Captain Burr and his gallant troopers, and went off like

a rocket to carry his dispatches to Omaha, and the cheers of his comrades followed far out on the prairie as he sped along through the darkness.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FUGITIVE STEED.

Buffalo Bill was no sparer of horse or human when he had his duty to do, and this held good on his ride to Omaha.

He did not care for himself, for he knew that he could stand any amount of fatigue, but he knew that his horse would fail him soon, and he looked about him to decide where he could get another animal.

He remembered a ranch on Beaver Creek, where he would likely be able to get a good horse, and thither he went, to find that the cabin had been burned and the cattle run off, and he knew that it had been the work of Black Face and his band.

But, as good luck would have it, just as his tired horse would carry him no further, he spied an animal feeding some distance off.

A closer observation, and he gave a shout of joy, for he had been told by Mr. Markham that he had lost a beautiful thoroughbred, a claybank, noted for his speed and wonderful endurance.

The animal had slipped his halter one night and in the morning could nowhere be found.

Bill remembered the locality where Mr. Markham had told him he had lost the horse, and he knew it was not very far from where he then was.

The silver mane and tail, long and flowing, the perfect buckskin color of the animal, added to his trim build, told Buffalo Bill that he had found the lost animal, and just in the nick of time.

"A fool for luck, and a poor man for children," as the soldiers say at the fort, and I must be the former to carry out the saying, for I do happen to be most lucky.

"But now, if I can only catch that horse, I'll be willing to have luck go against me for the next month."

The animal now sighted the scout, and instantly held his shapely head up, like a deer scenting danger.

Knowing that his own horse was too tired to go out of a walk, Bill at once turned him loose, and hit him a blow to make him go some distance from him.

The horse trotted off some thirty paces, and the scout at once dropped down behind the bank of the creek, ran along for some distance, and crawled through the long prairie grass, directly to where his horse had halted and stood with drooped head too tired to move.

He would have moved off, however, at seeing the form of the scout crawling in the grass, had he not been

checked by a kind word, and in an instant Buffalo Bill was at his feet.

Gazing in the direction of the fugitive horse, the scout saw that it was approaching slowly and cautiously, now that it no longer saw the rider.

Crouching in the grass, his lariat in hand, he waited in breathless suspense the cautious and tardy approach of the beautiful animal, which had become quite wild in these few days he had been alone on the prairie.

Nearer and nearer he approached, and, as if instinctively knowing what his master wanted, the scout's horse gave a low whinny.

The strange animal at once answered, and encouraged, came trotting up to his new-found companion, to find himself suddenly struggling in the coils of a lariat.

A shout of triumph burst from the lips of Buffalo Bill at his capture, and in ten minutes he had the beautiful beast bridled, saddled and in perfect control.

"I'll leave you, old fellow, to take care of yourself for a few days," he said kindly, to the animal who had served him so well, and throwing himself upon the claybank he darted away like an arrow from a bow.

Hardly had he disappeared over a rise in the prairie when a man arose from the prairie grass not far from the spot where the horse had been captured.

By his side lay his own steed, dead, having been ridden to death, and fallen in his tracks not ten minutes before Buffalo Bill came into sight.

His eyes also had caught sight of the claybank and recognized him, for the man was the treacherous guide of the Markham train.

And he, too, was plotting his capture when the sudden coming in sight of his enemy had thwarted his plans and caused him to witness the triumph of his hated foe.

Bitterly he cursed his ill fortune and the good luck of Bill Cody.

But, as cursing did not help him on the road to Omaha, he stripped his horse of his saddle and bridle, and shouldering them, trudged along, his heart black with passion and revengeful feelings toward the scout, whom he had not dared to risk a shot at, or meet in fair combat, fearing the result.

Buffalo Bill found the claybank a better horse by far than he had anticipated, more than justifying all that Mr. Markham and Madge had said concerning him.

The animal had been presented to the maiden as a colt, and she had only ridden him once or twice, as, not being thoroughly broken, he had taxed her strength beyond endurance, and had run away with her, but for all that she had enjoyed his easy gait and fleetness, and had regretted his loss greatly.

In his new rider he found a master he readily yielded to, and Buffalo Bill was delighted with the ease and ra-

quidity with which the beautiful animal carried him over the ground.

Halting now and then for rest, he found the horse ever ready to continue on the road, and he got to Omaha one night, half-a-dozen hours sooner than he had deemed possible.

Putting the horse up at the stable, the scout at once sought the commandant and delivered his dispatches, smiling at the remark:

"Well, Cody, you have not tarried by the way."

"You are mistaken, general, for I lost two days," was the response of Buffalo Bill, and he then told the general all the particulars of his trip and its interruptions.

"Well, Bill, if you would enter the army as a commissioned officer to do only frontier work, you would wear the rank of general on your shoulders before three years, and I guarantee the Indian troubles would be far less frequent than they are now, for it needs just such men as you to deal with them."

"Thank you, general, but I prefer the free and easy life of a scout to the rank of a regimental commander, for as much I can render you good service free from red tape," responded Bill with a smile.

"Egad, you are right; but as to this Markham and his train, for I met him just before he left. He is rather a superior man, is he not, to bury himself out upon the prairie on a cattle ranch?"

"So I think, sir, and his daughter is both lovely and refined, yet she seemed to love the wild life of the prairies, and I hope will have no-cause to regret her coming."

"I sincerely hope with you, for her own sake. But as you have killed that devilish renegade, White Panther, there will be far less danger to settlers, I think."

"Kio Carl yet lives, sir."

"True, and I guess we can arrange here for a price on his head, too, and my word for it, you will claim the takes."

"I don't care for blood money, general; but I'll do all I can to win any reward put upon the head of Kio Carl, for I have an old grudge against him and know he is my deadliest foe. When do you wish me to return, sir?"

"In two days, for I can send you as a guide for a supply train which goes to McPherson, if you care to accept the position."

"Certainly, sir, I will do anything that I can be useful in," and promising to see the general the next day, Buffalo Bill declined the invitation to put up at the barracks and wended his way into town to a hotel where he was well known to the proprietor.

He had just entered the saloon to look around for a familiar face, knowing well that it was the place to find a plainsman that might be in town, when the proprietor called him aside.

"Say, Bill," he said in a whisper, "do you know the fellow known as Kio Carl?"

"I do."

"Have you seen him lately?"

"I have."

"Where?"

"Out on the Loup."

"When?"

"Several dys ago. But why do you ask, Dolan?"

"Well, a man came into the bar a little while ago and he looked to me strangely like Carl, and I knew you would recognize him if anybody would, so I said nothing, but waited for you."

"Is he there now?"

"No, he has gone to the stables to see about his horses; but he has engaged a room and will soon return."

"I'll lay for him, and see if it is our man."

"Do so, Bill, for, to tell you the truth, a cattleman came in from the cottonwood some days ago, spent considerable money with the boys, and then started home considerably worse off for liquor, and this fellow I suspect of being Kio Carl came in to-night upon a horse the match of the one the ranchero had, if it is not the very animal, but the saddle and bridle are not the same."

"Well, I would know Kio Carl if he was painted black and wore a woolly wig, and if he is the one who has engaged a room with you, I'll just trump his little game, whatever it may be."

"I know you will, Bill, and I'll keep watch for you, so as to post you when he comes in."

The landlord and Buffalo Bill now turned away from the window where they had been standing while talking, and as they did so, a tall form arose from the shadow outside, and glided away in the darkness.

It was Kio Carl, and he muttered, as he turned and shook his fist at the hotel:

"You think you would know me, Buffalo Bill, under any disguise, do you? Well, we shall see if I cannot deceive even your eagle eyes."

CHAPTER X.

A SUDDEN DEPARTURE.

At the time of which I write, some years back, Omaha was rather a lively frontier settlement, far different from the handsome city of to-day.

It was then a border settlement, with soldiers, sutlers, traders, teamsters, cowboys, Indians, and last, but by no means least, Indian fighters and scouts, roving its streets.

There was also another class that was an important make-up of Omaha's citizens, or hangers-on, and that was the gambling fraternity, among whom were men who could handle a card with the skill of a "Heathen Chinee,"

and back up any assertion against their honor with revolver and bowie.

The water of the Missouri not being very palatable, whisky was more largely patronized than the purer fluid, with the result that about one-fourth of the population were continually in a state of excitement, which only blood-letting could cool off.

It is needless to say that many got their blood cooled, and so summarily and decidedly that it remained so, and it was a regret with the better class of citizens that numerous others of the turbulent kind were not "snuffed out" also.

In this community, Buffalo Bill was well known to all, by name, if not personally.

He was noted as the scout of the border, the deadliest shot, best horseman, worst hand with the knife, and a man to stick to the trail of a bad Indian or foe with the instinct of a bloodhound and the tenacity of a bulldog.

A frank-faced, generous-hearted man, ever ready to help a friend or a stranger in distress, he had yet shown terrific tiger claws when brought to bay by those who wished to ride him down and rid the country of one they dreaded.

Upon entering the saloon, therefore, after his short chat with the landlord, Buffalo Bill was greeted with shouts of welcome, and innumerable invitations to:

"Take su'thin', Bill."

Bill was considerably fatigued with his hardships of the past few days, and willingly acquiesced in the pressing invitation, by inviting all hands round to drink with him, as he said:

"Pards, I've got some hundreds of invitations to drink now, and if I accepted all, I'd get gloriously drunk, so we'll compromise by all drinking with me."

The compromise was accepted, and after paying the score, a by no means light one, Buffalo Bill took a seat at a table where he could face both doors, and took up a paper to read.

Thus passed an hour or two, and, interested in the paper, he seemed utterly oblivious to the excitement and wild clamor about him, yet not a person came in at the door that he did not see, and observing the landlord approaching him, he said quietly:

"Well, Dolan, he has not come yet."

"Nor will he."

"What's up?"

"He has skipped."

"No."

"Fact, for he heard all we said."

"How did you know this?"

"I got tired of waiting for him to come, so went out the stable and asked for him."

"Well?"

"Dan, my stableman, said he had seen him coming over there, when he stopped, turned back, and stood outside the window, while you and I were standing inside."

"Then he heard what we said?" was Buffalo Bill's quire remark.

"Of course, and skipped."

"But where did he go?"

"Dan said he thought he had gone back into the house until he saw him steal away from the window, and then start up the street."

"He left his horse?"

"Yes."

"Did he leave anything in his room?"

"He had nothing to leave in the shape of luggage, though he had plenty of money, for I saw it when he asked me to join him in a drink."

"Describe him, please, Dolan."

"A tall man, with a beard cut short, no mustache, and dressed in black. He looked like an itinerant parson."

"Kio Carl was differently dressed, had a full beard and a mustache, long hair, and looked like the itinerant deacon he is."

"But he could have cut off his mustache, cropped his beard and hair, and put on a black suit, for the one I wore was strangely like that the ranchero had on, whom I told you."

"Yes, he's no leopard, and can change his spots; but I think I should know Kio Carl under any disguise—I won't say what's the row there?" and Buffalo Bill sprang to his feet and soon cleared a way through the crowd to where a little mischief was going on which he thought called for his interference.

The excitement was certainly above the average, in the Overland Saloon, to attract the attention of Buffalo Bill.

But, accustomed as he was to wild scenes, the oaths and loud voices, often in anger, of the crowd around him, he yet, in spite of seeming indifference, heard and saw much that was going on which few believed he noticed.

While talking with the landlord, and interested in the disappearance of the stranger, he suddenly heard in pleading tones the cry:

"Gentlemen, for God's sake, don't harm me, for I am only a poor cripple and a stranger in your town."

"Yer swallow ain't crippled, ef yer leg are, an' durned ef yer shan't take benzine with us, ef we has ter pour it down yer," said a rude voice in reply.

"Thet are so, pard, fer we asked him ter drink, an' he refused jist ter insult us, an' he drinks, or I are a liar."

"But, gentlemen, I never drink, and surely you would not force me," was said in pleading tones, and many present were touched, yet dared offer no remonstrance, as the "gang" who had the stranger in their power was not to be dreaded by those who wished to keep out of the grave.

The one they insisted should drink with them was a rather pitiable-looking object, and should have excited compassion in the heart of any one.

He was badly crippled, one leg seeming to be bent and drawn up, which made him painfully lame, while he stooped, and was humpbacked.

His face was smoothly shaven, his hair cut too short to comb, and his attire was evidently the cast-off clothing of some large man who had taken pity upon him.

He wore green spectacles, as though his eyes were affected, and evidently carried his worldly goods with him, for a ragged blanket and overcoat, and a small bundle, with a handkerchief serving as carpetbag, hung on the end of a stick.

He had entered the hotel and asked the clerk for lodgings at half price, and been referred to the landlord, who was talking to Buffalo Bill at the bar.

Upon making the effort to reach Landlord Dolan he had been spied by the "Terrors," as the gang who seized him were called, and his strange appearance at once excited their ridicule instead of their compassion.

"Say, pards, heur's a What-Is-It; so let's hev a leetle fun," cried the discoverer of the poor wretch.

"What'll yer take fer it, Tom?" asked another.

"It hain't fer sale, fer I are going ter travel with it, and skeer Injuns off ther earth."

"Whar did yer ketch it, Tom?"

"It hed clum a tree, an' pulled it up arter it, when I shot, an' down it dropped.

"See; I hit it thar fust, an' broke its leg, an' next time I

struck it squar' in ther back, an' yer see ther swelling havn't yit gone down."

All this time Terror Tom had the cripple by the shoulder with an iron grip, wheeling him around for inspection, and referring to the deformity of his back when he spoke of the "swellin' not hevin' gone down."

"Give it a drink, Tom," cried one.

"Yas, see if it guzzles lickier."

"Pour benzine down him, an' set him on fire ter see him skip lively."

"Waal, I'm durned ef I don't pickle him with a leetle firewater, fer fear he may spile. Come, hum'back, take a glass of sperits."

"I never drink, sir," faintly said the cripple.

"Waal, yer does, when I shouts treat," responded the enraged bully, in a savage tone.

"No, sir; I am bad enough deformed, God knows, without being a drunkard," was the reply.

"Furies, he are a-preaching, or I are drunk," shouted one.

"I am no preacher, sir; only I do not drink."

"I say yer does, he says yer does, as there school grammars says, an' yer has ter obey, or I'll trim thet knapsack yer carries on yer back," was the brutal remark.

All the crowd had now gathered around, attracted by the strange cripple and his persecutors, and seemingly in terror, he gave vent to the appealing cry that had attracted the attention of Buffalo Bill.

Forcing his way through the crowd, he soon stood in front of the poor wretch, and then a silence fell upon them all, for the scout was recognized, and it was evident that he intended taking the part of "the under dog in the fight," as it was his custom to do.

CHAPTER XI.

DEFENDING A CRIPPLE.

"Well, my friend, what seems to be the matter?"

Buffalo Bill addressed the poor cripple, and spoke in a kindly tone as he stepped in front of him, where he stood cowering under the heavy clutch of Terror Tom upon his shoulder.

"I am but a poor cripple, sir, and a stranger in town, and these gentlemen wish to force me to take a drink."

"They will not make you drink if you do not wish to."

"Oh, yes they will, for they say so."

"Men don't always do all they threaten," was the quiet response of Buffalo Bill, and then he asked:

"Have you no friends in town?"

"No, sir, nor in the world. I am all alone."

This was said in a tone sufficient to touch almost any heart; but the bullies only laughed, and one of them broke out in song with:

"I'm lonely since my friends all died."

A laugh followed this musical burst, and wheeling upon the singer, Buffalo Bill said sternly:

"You'll sing another song, Dagger Dave, if you don't let this poor fellow alone, and I mean it for all of your bullying gang."

All drew their breath and waited, for these bold words of Buffalo Bill's showed his utter defiance of the Terrors, and was as much as a challenge for them to accept if they so willed.

"And what song mou't that be, Buffalo Bill?" asked Dagger Dave, who had won his name through always carrying a long Spanish dagger, upon the hilt of which his hand now dropped.

"'Do they miss me at home,' or words to that effect," replied Buffalo Bill with a light laugh, and half-turning to Terror Tom, he continued when the laugh subsided:

"Terror Tom, take your hand off that poor fellow."

"Is you my master, Buffalo Bill, to give orders?"

"This man is no match for any one of you, as you know; he is a stranger and a cripple, and I will not see him imposed upon by any gang of bullies such as I know you to be."

These were hard words, and the only surprise of the crowd was that the Terrors did not then and there spring upon Buffalo Bill.

But they were at heart cowards, and each one knew that at least one, if not more, of them would die; for Buffalo Bill was as quick as lightning in drawing a weapon, and as deadly as death in using it, and which one of them would fall none could tell, and that very circumstance made them go slow.

"I'll show you who is master if you don't let go that man, Terror Tom. You may run Omaha, because the people don't want trouble with you, but you can't impose on that poor wretch while I am here."

Terror Tom glanced at his two comrades, and then, as he knew he must do something or "take water" before hundreds whom he had bullied and who feared him, he

tightened his grip upon the shoulder of the cripple, who he cried:

"I'll cl'ar ther room fer action, Buffalo Bill, so out the window goes yer pet, fer fear he mou't get hurt in the scrimmage that are to be."

Terror Tom was a man of herculean build, and the cripple, drawn up, bent, and lame, did not come up to his shoulder, and it looked as though "out of the window he must go, if the bully made the effort to pitch him out."

And make the effort Terror Tom did, but to the surprise of all, before he could swing the cripple from his feet, he received a blow in the face that sent him to earth with a shock that shook the house, and stunned him, too.

And it was the cripple who gave the blow, straight off from the shoulder, full in the brutal face, and with a force that was terrible.

Buffalo Bill had sprung forward to aid the cripple, but seeing that if driven to it, he was able to take care of himself, he turned, as a shot was heard and a bullet passed through his hat.

It was the last shot that man ever fired, for before he could draw trigger a second time, Buffalo Bill dropped him dead in his tracks with his revolver, and then, turning just in time, caught the knife of Dagger Dave upon his weapon, snapped the blade, and, seizing his assailant in his strong arms, threw him bodily out of the window, carrying sash with him, with a crash and jingling that was deafening.

"There's another window for you, Terror Tom," cried Buffalo Bill, seizing the king bully as he was scrambling to his feet, and dragging him to the window.

"Carry the sash with you, Tom," he continued, and with an exhibition of his marvelous strength which raised a yell of admiration from the crowd, he hurled the giant bully through the other window into the yard, giving him a fall of several feet, and sending him to join Dagger Dave, who was collecting himself together for flight, gashed with glass, bleeding and thoroughly cowed.

"Run, pards, Buf'ler Bill are comin' ter bury yer time," yelled a spectator out of the window, and the two desperadoes quickly made tracks toward the stable, dazed, bleeding and utterly unable to account for the way it occurred.

"Pard, you can hit as hard as a Government mule can kick, and that is saying volumes."

"Give me your hand for the neat way in which you so

Terror Tom to earth, and tell me your name," said Buffalo Bill, stepping toward the cripple, who, after his knockdown of Terror Tom, stood as innocently by as though an uninterested spectator of the affair.

"My name is Cripple Kit," he said, in soft tones, almost womanly in their sweetness.

"You were not christened Cripple Kit?" answered Buffalo Bill, with a smile.

"No, sir, but I am such a deformity I soon got the name, and it has stuck to me through life, and will doubtless be put on my tomb, if I get one," was the sad reply.

"Where do you hail from?"

"The East."

"And have you come West to live?"

"It looked a while ago as though I had come West to die, and if it had not been for you, I fear they would have killed me, and, deformed as I am, I love life."

"Most people do; what do you expect to go at out here?"

"Anything I can get to do."

"Well, I'll see if I can help you."

"Come, gentlemen, let us have a drink, and, Dolan, please have that poor fellow buried at my expense, and send in the bill for your windows, too," and Buffalo Bill pointed to the man he had slain, whose body lay in the corner where it had fallen, a bullet in his brain.

"Never mind the glasses, Bill, for it was worth the expense to see you break them with Dagger Dave and Terror Tom, and as for Flighty, the town will bury him, and give you a vote of thanks for giving it the opportunity."

"Pard, you'll join Bill, I s'pose?" and Dolan turned to Cripple Kit, who answered:

"No, thank you; I never drink."

"Then don't tech it, pard," said a man with a very red face and enlarged nose, "fer it are a dern good 'rastler, an' I hes yet ter see ther galoot it can't down in a reg'lar stand up meetin'. A leetle rye straight, boss," and the individual who had started out on a temperance lecture to Cripple Kit ended his harangue by taking "four fingers" undiluted, and with a smack of relief he added:

"I drinks a leetle myself, Pard Cripple; it are my custom never to desert a old friend, an' spirits an' me has been acquainted too long fer me ter go back on 'em when I are hastenin' ter ther tomb—fill ther glass up again, boss, thet I may propose a toast ter Buf'ler Bill."

This ingenious device to get a second drink "ter keep

t'other from bein' lonesome," was successful, and all stood ready with their glasses, while Temperance Jerry—so called from preaching and never practicing—cried in stentorian tones:

"Pards, heur are to Buf'ler Bill, ther Prince of ther Plains, an' a man who never desarted the trail o' a friend or a foe."

The toast was drunk with gusto, and in the excitement that followed Buffalo Bill, Cripple Kit and Landlord Dolan left the saloon to the noisy revelers.

CHAPTER XII.

A HOME FOR CRIPPLE KIT.

The scene in the saloon created quite an excitement in Omaha, and made Buffalo Bill far more of a hero than ever before.

His having killed one of the terrors and squelched the others, for they had not been heard of since the fracas, added to the purity of the atmosphere in town.

Early the next morning he went on the search, and set a score of trusty men at the same work, for Kio Carl; but nowhere could the renegade be found.

The horse he had ridden into Omaha was proven to be the property of the ranchero, for his dead body had been found by the trail side, a bullet in his brain, and his clothing gone.

It was evident that his murderer had robbed him and then taken his clothing, and, as his suit tallied with the one worn by the man whom Dolan, the landlord, had suspected was the renegade, it seemed beyond cavil that he was right in his suspicion.

The horse still remaining in the stable proved that the owner, or at least the one who had left it there, was afraid to show himself to claim his alleged property.

Two days after the arrival of Buffalo Bill in Omaha a courier arrived from Fort Laramie, and he was at once sought out by the scout, who knew him well.

It was Texas Jack, a scout and plainsman, who has, like Buffalo Bill, won a name that will live long in song and story.

"Well, Bill, I was just about to strike your trail, for I have a message for you."

"How are you, old pard?" and Texas Jack grasped the outstretched hand of Buffalo Bill with the grip of true friendship.

"I'm glad to see you, Jack, and suppose you have come by McPherson and Kearney, and are just from Laramie?"

"Yes, I came through on the jump, and start back to-morrow.

"I stopped over at both McPherson and Kearney, and saw the boys just coming in, after your fight at Lone Tree.

"They were full of talk about you, Bill, and boasting over your little plan to wipe out old Black Face—but is this a friend of yours, Bill?" and Jack turned to Cripple Kit, who had come up with Buffalo Bill.

"Yes, Jack, and a good fellow he is. Cripple Kit, this is my friend, Texas Jack, of whom you have heard."

The two men grasped hands and Jack said in his free and easy style:

"Glad to see you, sir; but, Bill, the boys gathered in just thirty-seven scalps that morning after the Lone Tree fracas, and are betting that you took four or five.

"I took odds that you belted half-a-dozen top-knots, for I know you, Bill, so tell me if I win or lose?"

"You win, Jack," was the quiet reply.

"How many?"

"Seven."

"You were in it thick, but that's your style."

"No, but we gave them a direct surprise, and the Indians were thick, and I could not miss," modestly replied Bill.

"They found Black Face, but his hair was gone."

"Yes, I got it."

"Well, there was another villain who got away."

"Who was that, Jack?"

"That renegade, Kio Carl."

"He was not there."

"You are mistaken, Bill."

"No, he escaped from the Markham train, stole the horse of the one who let him go, and struck south, for I followed his trail for a short distance."

"It was a blind, for he doubled on his trail, and a wounded Indian said that he came up and told Black Face the camp at Lone Tree was a trap; but the chief had been fooled so cleverly by you in playing the renegade that he did not believe Kio, swore that he had some motive in keeping him from attacking the train, so bound him and left him on the prairie."

"And he was captured?" cried Buffalo Bill, eagerly.

"Not he; Satan took care of him, for he escaped somehow."

"Now, tell me if you know anything about the Markham train."

"Yes; it was going all right to the ranch when I met it. And, Bill, isn't Miss Markham a beauty?"

"She is a very lovely lady, Jack."

"She thinks a great deal of you, for she told me so."

"Much obliged for her good opinion of me."

"And her old father just swears by you."

"You are full of blarney, Jack; is there anything you want me to do for you?" laughed Buffalo Bill.

"Yes."

"Name it."

"Go back with me as far as McPherson."

"Can't do it, for I carry a train back, that goes clear through to Denver."

"Too bad, for I hoped for your company."

"But you can do something for me, Jack."

"I'm your man, Bill."

"My friend here, Cripple Kit, as he calls himself, wants to go on a ranch as a cowboy."

"He is a good rider, in spite of his lameness, and I will send him to Mr. Markham, who asked me to send him several good men for his ranch, and I want you to drop him there as you go by, for he is no plainsman to find the way alone."

"I'll do it, but his horse must be a good one, as I go fast, Bill, as you know."

"It will try your horse to keep up with the one he rides for I gave him, to take back to Mr. Markham, a claybank that got away from the train, and which I caught on my way here, and I will frankly say that I never backed a better horse for speed or wind."

"Well, I'll be glad of Kit's company, I assure you, and I start to-morrow at dawn on the return."

And at break of day the following morning Texas Jack started on his way back to Fort Laramie, with Cripple Kit for his companion, and mounted upon the splendid claybank horse.

In his pocket he carried a letter to Mr. Markham from Buffalo Bill.

This letter of recommendation the scout told Cripple

Kit to read and then hand to Mr. Markham, who, without doubt, would give him a place in his home, and the friendless fellow seemed overjoyed at the prospect.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE THIRD MEETING.

Buffalo Bill had not forgotten his pledge to Salt Lake Saul, regarding the wishes of the dying renegade as to what he wished him to do with the papers he told the scout he would find in his belt.

Examining the papers while at Omaha, Buffalo Bill found that they told the story of a very evil life, and there were documents of a legal nature which had been stolen, and were most important in righting a wrong.

Salt Lake Saul had been most anxious to right this wrong, and had seemed pleased when Buffalo Bill had promised to aid him.

Seeing the value of the contents of the belt, Buffalo Bill had sought the adjutant and chaplain of Fort Omaha and placed in their hands the carrying out of Salt Lake Saul's wishes, so that justice could be done, and it may be said here that it was faithfully done by the two officers to the scout's satisfaction.

After another couple of days spent in Omaha, Buffalo Bill started out in charge of the train the colonel had spoken to him about and which was going to seek a settlement near the ranch of Mr. Markham.

Buffalo Bill safely guided the train to its destination, and then going to the ranch of Mr. Markham, was much pleased to find that Kit had arrived there in safety, had been warmly welcomed and had already begun to feel at home.

As for Kit, he was happy in his new home, he told the scout.

The welcome Buffalo Bill got was a most cordial one.

Aunt Phyllis did her best cooking for him, while, with the scout as his hero, the youth, Pepper, begged to become one of his brave band of men in buckskin, a request Cody readily granted.

"You saved us, Cody," said Mr. Markham, feelingly; and he added:

"Yes, our safety was assured, and the doom of those

evil men sealed the moment we were protected and they were shadowed by Buffalo Bill, the sure shot."

Grasping the scout's hand warmly, Madge said, earnestly:

"Yes, and my foolish act forced you into another death grapple, which, but for your sure shot, would have cost you your life. I shall never forget all that I owe to you, Buffalo Bill."

After a few days spent pleasantly with the Markhams, Buffalo Bill took his departure to return to the fort, where he was chief of scouts.

"I have but one dread, Mr. Cody, and that is that Kio Carl is yet at large," said Mr. Markham, as he bade the scout good-by.

"Kill him as you would a snake, sir, for he will be merciless, and be on the watch, for it would not surprise me if he came here in disguise," answered the scout, and with a wave of his hand he rode away.

Watching him from the piazza they saw another horseman riding slowly toward him.

As the two approached there was a quick movement upon the part of each horseman, Buffalo Bill spurring forward suddenly.

Then two shots rang out, and the stranger reeled and fell from his saddle.

In dismay at the tragic scene, those watching saw the scout dismount, raise the limp form in his arms, and throw it across the saddle, then remounting, he came back toward the ranch.

"Mr. Markham, you need no longer fear Kio Carl, for he is dead, as you see. He was disguised as a preacher, spectacles, smooth face and clothes, but I knew him at a glance, as I was sure that I would. Will you kindly bury him, for I must go at once," and Buffalo Bill continued on his trail, while Madge Markham said:

"And Mr. Cody told him, you remember, to beware of their third meeting—I feel safe, now."

And as he rode on his way, Buffalo Bill mused:

"The Black Face, the White Panther, and now Kio Carl—the worst trio on the border."

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 20) will contain the further adventures of Buffalo Bill, the story being entitled, "Buffalo Bill's Victories."

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